



Friday 24 November, 7.30pm
Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall

Chineke! Orchestra

Andrew Grams conductor

Duke Ellington Nutcracker Suite (Overture)

Joan Armatrading Symphony No.1 (World premiere)

Interval

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky Symphony No.5

Full programme: 1 hour and 54 minutes



Introduction

by Chi-chi Nwanoku CBE

Hello everyone - thank you for joining us for our last Chineke! Orchestra concert here at the Southbank this year!

2023 has seen such a varied range of concerts that it's almost impossible to believe that our 8-year-old classical orchestra can cover collaborations with artists that include Stormzy, Ardee & Cat Burns, to Alicia Keys, the Black Panther soundtrack, to renowned pop stars like Beverley Knight, Craig David, and saxophonist Yolanda Brown at our Windrush concert, Nubya Garcia, Yussef Dayes, Emily Dankworth and just last week Angélique Kidjo, as well as our stand-out straight classical concerts that have taken us across Europe several times, our first North American tour and up and down the UK, not forgetting our televised appearance at the BBC Proms again and of course here at the Southbank. Our Juniors have had some wonderful successes along the way as well, including their fantastic concert featuring 91 of them at Fairfield Halls in Croydon and a chamber group of Juniors for English Heritage at the Great Hall at Lincoln's Inn recently. The year seems to have rushed past and so it's important to stop for a moment and take stock of everything we've done and everywhere we've seen. In fact, that list does not even cover a year - it goes from February 2023, and we're only in November now. I can proudly say we have again more than achieved what any orchestra in the world would be proud to claim.

Back to tonight's concert. Seeing as it's 'silly season' as some would say, we actually do have something 'seasonal' to



Image © Christian Simibaldi

offer and celebrate this Christmas. In fact it's the first time we've done something to mark the festive season - our latest album, which I think qualifies as a Christmas Album. Traditionally people flock to see Tchaikovsky's ballet The Nutcracker at Christmastime. Well, we're launching our album of the great Duke Ellington's jazz version of The Nutcracker. You can stream the full album on Spotify or buy it online.

In tonight's concert we'll kick off with a short overture from Ellington's Nutcracker, beginning with a snippet which is actually the first 16 bars of Tchaikovsky's original (that conductor Damon Gupton thought would be a great teaser at the beginning for the audience), before launching with a glorious walking bass-line straight into the Ellington without a break, so you'll know we're there!

When I first discovered this extraordinary piece, it was a touching experience to

witness how this Black jazz icon Duke Ellington and his genius colleague Billy Strayhorn crafted such an imaginative, magical, witty and captivating jazz 'take' on a well-known classical work. In their reinterpretation of Tchaikovsky's beloved ballet, they demonstrated not only their immense skills in reworking and seamlessly transitioning the piece into another genre but also their profound respect and homage to the great Russian composer - something rarely seen in reverse, especially in a world where appropriation often occurred without acknowledgment. We had an absolute ball performing and recording Ellington's entire five-movement suite. I love to imagine the two great composers, who walked such different musical paths, meeting face-to-face. One can't help but wonder what it would have been like if Tchaikovsky had returned the honour by composing a piece originally fashioned by Ellington. As we perform this piece tonight, you'll notice that in addition to the usual symphonic lineup of players, Ellington's arrangement includes a jazz double bass, jazz trumpet, saxophone, bass clarinet, and a drum kit.

My journey into the world of Joan Armatrading's Symphony No. 1 began with a humble email, followed by a phone call from the legendary artist herself. It was a moment that sparked excitement and curiosity as we discussed the outline and potential for Chineke! Orchestra to give life to the world premiere of her symphonic debut. Joan suggested visiting me to could share her electric piano version of the symphony, so I could understand more of her vision. We delved into the intricacies of the piece and, for similar reasons to why I created Chineke!, this was a new and unique opportunity

to showcase an already widely acclaimed musician in a brand new light. This was one of the very few Black women who we all admired from afar, who showed us what was possible. Now it was our turn to return those thanks and have her sit on our shoulders. It is an honour to be a part of this unique experience - an early introduction to her symphonic sound world, watching it evolve into the finished version that we all have the privilege of experiencing today.

After the interval, tonight's concert reaches its conclusion with Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony - a work that Tchaikovsky approached from a position of extreme self-doubt - he wrote a letter to his brother, Modest, confessing his fear that his imagination had dried up, that he had nothing more to express in music.

They say you have to suffer for your art, that it's 'no pain, no gain.' It's a shame if it really has to be this way, but some of the world's most extraordinary stories and triumphs have come through adversity. So there must be a certain amount of truth in it, and that's what I always think of when I think of Tchaikovsky. As we embark on his Fifth Symphony tonight, we're reminded of the deep well of personal experiences that can shape an artist's work. It's a thought-provoking notion - how adversity, whether spoken or unspoken, can kindle the creative fire that fuels the music we'll experience. Tchaikovsky himself, known for his exceptional talent, often grappled with a profound sense of insecurity about his capabilities, and was often crippled by certain comments from the press reviews. Tonight's journey explores the profound, often unspoken dimensions that influence the music we hear - a testament to the universal language of emotions in art.

Thank you again to all our friends and supporters, as it's you who keep us relevant and motivated. Without you attending our concerts, purchasing our recordings or making generous donations to the Chineke! Foundation, we couldn't keep this music alive. You've supported the backbone of all we do. We are here because of you, and for that, we are profoundly grateful.

We wish each and every one of you a safe and joyous Christmastime and look forward to continuing our musical journey with you in 2024.

Thank you.

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

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We're the largest arts centre in the UK and one of the nation's top visitor attractions, showcasing the world's most exciting artists at our venues in the heart of London. We're here to present great cultural experiences that bring people together, and open up the arts to everyone.

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Duke Ellington (1899-1974)

& **Billy Strayhorn** (1915-1967)

after **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** (1840-1893)

The Nutcracker Suite (Overture) c. 4'

It was not jazz giant Duke Ellington but his colleague Billy Strayhorn who first floated the idea of adapting Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite, in early 1960. A composer and pianist from Pittsburgh, Strayhorn began working with Ellington soon after impressing him with an arrangement of one of Duke's own works at their first meeting in December 1938. The pair collaborated so closely that they were, allegedly, frequently unable to recall who had generated which ideas.

After Strayhorn's untimely death in 1967, Ellington paid him a fitting tribute: "Billy Strayhorn was my right arm, my left arm, and the eyes in back of my head; my brain waves [were] in his head, and his in mine." Somewhat belatedly, *The Nutcracker Suite* was the first time Strayhorn had been given equal billing with Ellington since the composers began their creative partnership over twenty years prior. Tchaikovsky also received equal billing alongside Ellington and Strayhorn on the LP cover. The intention was clear: this was to be considered a co-composed work from a trio of equal contributors.

Despite the 68 year gap between the release of Tchaikovsky's original, and Strayhorn and Ellington's reimagining, both versions brim with creative variety and flair. Tchaikovsky and Ellington were similarly used to writing with choreography in mind, be that the Russian ballet or the stage of Harlem's Cotton Club, and the Nutcracker Suite's overture carries itself with an unmistakable swagger.

© Charlotte Barbour-Condini

Joan Armatrading (b. 1950)

Symphony No. 1 (c. 30')

"It might be a surprise to other people that I've written a symphony, but it's not a surprise to me; I knew at some point I would do it." Forging her own path spanning from pop to rock, blues, folk, jazz and more, Joan Armatrading embraces the creative joy and musical inspiration she finds across genre boundaries. She has always known she would write a classical work; sitting in her studio one day in 2021, she realised "this is it, I'm starting".

With a ream of gold, platinum and silver discs to her name, Armatrading's full list of achievements point to the scope of her creative reach. Two times Brit nominated, thrice Grammy nominated, recipient of the coveted Ivor Novello Academy Fellowship Award, and given a CBE in 2020, Joan's pioneering approach and distinctive artistry has been rightly recognised across the music industry, and around the globe.

Armatrading's route into playing and writing music began as unconventionally as it continued. Although her father owned a guitar, the instrument remained out of bounds for her. When her mother bought a piano it was mainly intended to be a piece of decorative furniture rather than an instrument. Joan seized the opportunity to start playing this new furniture, and soon persuaded her mother to get her a second hand guitar, in exchange for two spare prams. Entirely self-taught, but an exceptional observer, Armatrading became adept at finding inspiration and ideas in everything she listened to. She has produced herself since 1986 and played every instrument on her records since 2003.

With broad listening habits that have included classical music since her teenage years, Armatrading has never been convinced by the idea of keeping genres strictly separated. "If you like music," she asks, "why would you only like jazz, or pop? Why would you not want to explore all aspects of it?" And under the label of 'classical music', Joan delves into the variety she finds within the genre, "from Vivaldi to Bach

to Beethoven to Mozart to Rachmaninov to Michael Tippett." Although drawing inspiration from a spectrum of creative voices, she consistently avoids imitation, and this is as true of her symphony as it is for her other work. "As usual I stayed in the way of composing that I have done when I write pop songs. I'm just myself. I didn't write the symphony thinking I would like it to be like anyone but Joan."

To Armatrading, writing a symphony feels not like a creative pivot, but a natural continuation of her existing artistic approach. As the first UK female singer songwriter to gain international success, the first non-jazz artist to play in London's Ronnie Scott's main room, the first female UK artist to debut at number 1 in the Billboard Blues chart and the first female British artist to be Grammy-nominated in the Blues category, her career is already characterised by projects that break new ground and sidestep expectations. Experimenting in new contexts is a core part of her process; in 2016 she leapt into a commission to compose music for the Donmar Warehouse's acclaimed production of *The Tempest*, which played in both London and New York. Embracing new ventures is also etched into Armatrading's wider ethos. Away from musical pursuits, she coordinated a major charity fundraiser through running her first marathon at the age of 57, and completed a History degree whilst touring the world. For Joan, the prospect of composing a symphony was not only artistically liberating, but also rang true to her lifelong creative outlook.

Armatrading started her composition process with the movement that felt the closest to writing a song. Beginning with the melodic second movement, she completed the remaining three movements in 2022, building up the symphony over a period of around five months. "I'm at my happiest when writing", says Joan, and - as with her uplifting songwriting - the composer has harnessed that feeling in the orchestral score. For Armatrading, the symphony is written to capture a sound that "holds me up, makes me smile, [even] makes me want to dance". From its expansive first movement with singing strings, strident brass lines and gentle toe-tapping rhythms, all the way through to its rousing finale, Armatrading's Symphony No. 1 extends an open invitation to bring joy into the concert hall.

© Charlotte Barbour-Condini

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64 (c. 45')

Andante – Allegro con anima

Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

Valse. Allegro moderato

Finale. Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace –

Moderato assai e molto maestoso – Presto –

Molto meno mosso

The year was 1888, and ostensibly at the height of his career, Tchaikovsky harboured intense fears he had permanently lost his creative inspiration. Sharing his concerns with his brother Modest, he also confided in his patron, Nadezhda von Meck. "I'm terribly anxious to prove not only to others but also to myself that I'm not yet played out. I often have doubts about myself, hasn't the time now come to stop, haven't I always overstrained my imagination too much, hasn't the source dried up?"

Tchaikovsky had first become acquainted with Nadezhda twelve years earlier in December 1876, although they had not officially met. Indeed, it was one of the stipulations of her continued patronage that they would never do so. Thus began a string of surprisingly intimate written communications that eventually totalled over 1,200 letters. On Tchaikovsky's side at least, the attachment was platonic. Despite marrying Antonina Miliukova in 1877, he had never been interested in romantic relationships with women. But Nadezhda provided the composer with a close friendship, a deep bond of trust, and the financial security to leave his teaching post at the Moscow Conservatory and freely pursue his creative ambitions.

By the time Tchaikovsky began work on his Fifth Symphony, it had been over ten years since the completion of his Fourth. The breakdown he endured during the writing of his last symphony may have contributed to the decade-long gap. In 1877, only a few weeks after his wedding, Tchaikovsky had tried to catch a fatal bout of pneumonia by wading into the Moscow river, and remained too distressed to compose for months. Combine his

eventual pride in the success of the Fourth, his anxiety to further prove himself in his next symphonic offering, and his lack of self-assurance, and the pressure must have felt gargantuan.

The summer of 1888 was spent at the composer's new dacha, or holiday home, in Frolovskoe, not far from his main residence in Moscow. He moved there in April and, rejuvenated by the forest surroundings, managed to finish the symphony in four months. As with the turbulent Fourth Symphony, Tchaikovsky was again inspired by the idea of a struggle with Fate, but the composer used the Fifth to delve deeper into an exploration of spiritual hopelessness and inadequacy. "If Beethoven's Fifth is Fate knocking at the door", wrote an early reviewer, "Tchaikovsky's Fifth is Fate trying to get out."

While the premiere's audience in St. Petersburg expressed enthusiasm, the symphony was panned by critics, in a blow to the composer's already fragile confidence. Modest Tchaikovsky attributed the first performance's drawbacks to his brother's lack of skill on the conducting podium, rather than to the music itself. But Pyotr struggled not to take early criticism to heart. Writing to von Meck, he lamented:

"Having played my Symphony twice in Petersburg and once in Prague, I have come to the conclusion that it is a failure. There is something repellent in it, some over-exaggerated colour, some insincerity of fabrication which the public instinctively recognises. It was clear to me that the applause and ovations referred not to this but to other works of mine, and that the Symphony itself will never please the public."

Tchaikovsky's perception of the work's success fluctuated with the ebb and flow of critical opinion. A mere months after despairing to von Meck about the music's "insincerity and artificiality", he was heartened by the enthusiastic response of an audience in Hamburg, a performance at which Johannes Brahms had been present, and offered Tchaikovsky words of encouragement. Writing in April 1889 after a concert in Hanover, he was in much better spirits: "The Fifth Symphony was beautifully played and I have started to love it again — I was beginning to develop an exaggerated negative opinion about it."

In spite of Tchaikovsky's own ambivalence, the Fifth Symphony has not only become one of the composer's most enduringly popular works, but remains one of the most performed

symphonies of modern concert programming. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, public appreciation of his music sat alongside critical accusations of sentimentality, and even frivolity; the American reviewer Allan Kozinn memorably derided him as a "master confectioner" as late as 1992. Although stung by similar criticism from his contemporaries, Tchaikovsky never allowed it to shape his style, retaining in his work an emotional directness that spoke directly to performers and audiences alike.

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Glossary:

Allegro: at a brisk pace

Andante: at a moderate (literally 'walking') pace

Cantabile: in a singing style

con alcuna licenza: with some freedom

Con anima: with spirit; animatedly

Maestoso: majestic

Meno mosso: less quickly

Moderato: at a moderate pace

Presto: at a quick speed

Valse: waltz

Vivace: lively and brisk



Chi-chi Nwanoku CBE

Founder and Artistic Director of Chineke!

An ex-sprinter and half the size of her double bass, Chi-chi Nwanoku has gained a reputation as one of the finest exponents of her instrument today.

The eldest of five children from Nigerian and Irish parents, Chi-chi was seven when she discovered the piano at a neighbour's. She returned to their house daily to play until the neighbours got so fed up they wheeled the piano up the road and gave it to her! Meanwhile, she was spotted by an athletics coach and trained as a 100-metre sprinter, eventually competing at National level. This career ended abruptly due to a knee injury aged 18, which is when (and why) she took up the double bass and actively pursued a career in music. She studied at the Royal Academy of Music and with Franco Petracchi in Rome, and soon found herself in demand internationally.

Chi-chi is the Founder and Artistic Director of the Chineke! Foundation, which supports, inspires and encourages Black and ethnically diverse classical musicians working in the UK and Europe. The Chineke! Foundation celebrates diversity in the classical music industry through its two orchestras, the Chineke! Orchestra and Chineke! Junior Orchestra, as well as its educational and Community engagement work. Ultimately, the Chineke! Foundation aims to give classical Black and ethnically diverse classical musicians a platform on which to excel, and by such methods increase the representation of Black and ethnically diverse classical musicians in British and European orchestras.

Chi-chi added the Chineke! Voices to the organisation in 2022 - the first majority Black & ethnically diverse consort of voices in the world. In 2022 Chi-chi became Executive Producer of Chineke! Records in a new partnership with Decca records. In 1986 Chi-chi was a founder member of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment where she held the position of Principal double bass for 30 years.

She is Professor of Double Bass Historical Studies at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM), and was made a Fellow of RAM in 1998. Chi-chi's range of musical interests have resulted in a broad career performing and recording in a diversity of styles from authentic baroque through to 21st century and new commissions, with many of Europe's leading chamber orchestras and ensembles. Some of her notable chamber recordings include Schubert's Trout Quintet (recorded three times), and Octet, Beethoven Septet, Hummel Piano quintet and Boccherini Sonatas. Her solo recording of Dittersdorf and Vanhal Concertos with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra (Hyperion) received critical acclaim.

In 2012 Barrie Gavin directed a documentary film about Chi-chi's career, called Tales from the Bass Line. As a broadcaster, Chi-chi presented BBC Radio 3 Requests for four years; guest presented for BBC Proms; Jury member of BBC 2 TV Classical Star competition and Jury member of BBC Young Musician 2020. She presented a two-part series In Search of the Black Mozart for BBC Radio 4 in 2015 which brought to life the stories and music of black composers and musicians from the 18th century, whose vivid presence on the classical music scene have slipped through the net.

Chi-chi was the 'mentor' for the 2016 BBC 4 TV series All Together Now, the Great Orchestra Challenge. Chi-chi is featured in the BBC Radio 4 series Only Artists. In 2018 she was Kirsty Young's guest on BBC Radio 4, Desert Island Discs. In 2017 Chi-chi presented a documentary for Sky-Arts Passions series on the extraordinary life and music of the mixed heritage composer of African-British descent, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. Chi-chi Contributed & Participated in the 2020 BBC Documentary 'Being Beethoven'. She has presented 3 series of six-part episodes called Chi-chi's Classical Champions for Classic FM since 2021. In 2021 Chi-chi made a compelling documentary for BBC radio 3 entitled Reclaiming the Bridgetower Sonata, about George Polgreen Bridgetower, the true dedicatee of Beethoven's

famous violin sonata opus 47, No.9, otherwise known as the Kreutzer sonata. Chi-chi served on the Board of the Association of British Orchestras (ABO) from 2008–13 and National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain 2000-18, London Music Fund and Tertis Foundation.

She created the ABO/RPS Salomon Prize, which celebrates the 'unsung heroes' working in the ranks of British orchestras. She was a Council Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society from 2009-2022.

Chi-chi was awarded the CBE in 2022 for Services to Music and Diversity in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Birthday Honours. She previously received the OBE in 2017 and the MBE in the 2001 Queen's Birthday honours for Services to Music. She was one of the 100 – 'Happy List' in the Independent on Sunday 2011. In 2016 she was appointed as an Honorary Fellow of Trinity Laban Conservatoire in recognition of her 'pioneering contribution to music, in particular the inspiration she provides, the commitment she has shown, and the contribution she has made to addressing inequalities within classical music in the UK, most recently through the Chineke! Foundation'. Chi-chi is an Ambassador for the London Music Fund. Chi-chi was awarded the Black British Business Awards, Person of the Year 2016.

She was the recipient of the ABO Award 2017, which is awarded for 'the most important contribution to the orchestral life of the UK'. She was named in the Top 10 of BBC Woman's Hour, Women in Music Power List 2018. In 2018 Chi-chi was awarded the inaugural Commonwealth Cultural Enterprise Award for Women in the Arts at the Commonwealth Business Women's Awards and made an Honorary Doctor of Music at the University of Chichester. In 2019 Chi-chi was made an Honorary Doctor Music of the Open University, was featured in the Royal Academy of Music exhibition 'Hitting the Right Note: Amazing Women of the Academy' and awarded the Creative Industries Award at the Variety Catherine Awards 2018 and shortlisted for the Grocho Maverick Award. In 2021 she was featured in Patrick Vernon's book 100 Great Black Britons.

Chi-chi was voted to the Powerlist of Britain's 100 Most Influential Black People in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. In 2021 Chi-chi was featured in the book Superheroes published by grime and hip-hop artist, Stormzy.



Andrew Grams

conductor

With a unique combination of intensity, enthusiasm and technical clarity, American conductor **Andrew Grams** has steadily built a reputation for his dynamic concerts, ability to connect with audiences, and long-term orchestra building. He's the winner of 2015 Conductor of the Year from the Illinois Council of Orchestras and has led orchestras throughout the United States including the Chicago Symphony, Detroit Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, and the Houston Symphony.

Andrew Grams became music director of the Elgin Symphony Orchestra after an international search in 2013 and recently concluded his tenure there after 8 seasons. His charismatic conducting and easy accessibility have made him a favorite of Elgin Symphony audiences. A frequent traveler, Mr. Grams has worked extensively with orchestras abroad, including the symphony orchestras of

Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, the Orchestre National de France, Hong Kong Philharmonic, BBC Symphony Orchestra London, the symphony orchestras of Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, and Het Residentie Orchestra in The Hague, Netherlands. He has led multiple performances of New York City Ballet's George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker* and the first performances of the new production of *The Nutcracker* for the Norwegian National Ballet in Oslo. Also an educator, Mr. Grams has worked with orchestras at institutions such as the Curtis Institute of Music, the Cleveland Institute of Music, Indiana University, Roosevelt University, the National Orchestral Institute at the University of Maryland, and the Amsterdam Conservatorium. Born in Severn, Maryland, Mr. Grams began studying the violin when he was eight years old. In 1999 he received a Bachelor of Music in Violin Performance from The Juilliard School, and in 2003 he received a conducting degree from the Curtis Institute of Music where he studied with Otto-Werner Mueller. He was selected to spend the summer of 2003 studying with David Zinman, Murry Sidlin and Michael Stern at the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen and returned to that program again in 2004. Mr. Grams served as Assistant Conductor of The Cleveland Orchestra from 2004-2007 where he worked under the guidance of Franz Welser-Möst, and has since returned for several engagements. As an accomplished violinist, Mr. Grams was a member of the New York City Ballet Orchestra from 1998-2004, serving as acting associate principal second violin

in 2002 and 2004. Additionally, he has performed with ensembles including the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Luke's, Brooklyn Philharmonic, and the New Jersey Symphony.



Adam Gibbs

Assistant Conductor

Adam Gibbs, distinguished Black British conductor and violist, began his musical journey through rigorous training at the prestigious institutions of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the Royal Academy of Music, London.

Recognised as an RCS Trust scholar and the esteemed recipient of the Hugh S Robertson Prize for conducting, Adam was granted the opportunity to conduct Scotland's orchestras of the highest calibre, including the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the orchestra of Scottish Opera, and Scotland's premier contemporary ensemble, Red Note Ensemble. Moreover, his talent was recognised with an invitation to participate in the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra's Emerging Conductor's Showcase, a testament to his ability and dedication.

Adam's dedication to his craft is underscored by his extensive mentorship under renowned conductors such as Ilan Volkov, Martyn Brabbins, Thomas Sondergard, Kevin John Edusei, Mark

Wigglesworth, and Antony Hermus. His association with Antony Hermus extended beyond his training, as he also served as assistant conductor at the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra on a programme of Wagner and Korngold.

In the previous season, Adam achieved a remarkable milestone, making his conducting debut at the Southbank Centre to a sold-out Purcell Room, collaborating with the genre-defying ensemble Project Instrumental on their innovative "Music of the Unseen" programme. Furthermore, he conducted the electrifying Multi-Story Orchestra in spellbinding performances of "Verified" and "The Endz" at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, receiving well-deserved acclaim with a glowing 4-star review from The Times.

Additionally, Adam's commitment not only to music but social change extends to the English National Opera, where he served as an assistant conductor for Jeanine Tesori's and Tazewell Thompson's opera "Blue," a work depicting scenes of racial violence, love, and loss - marking a significant impact in the realm of opera and social discourse.

Looking ahead, the upcoming season promises more exciting invitations and opportunity. He is set to assist Andrew Grams at Chineke! Orchestra and is preparing to enthrall audiences with his debut performance with the Southbank Sinfonia, featuring a programme inspired by World Book Day. Adam also looks forward to sitting on a panel for the Royal Philharmonic Society's Storytelling Award and continuing his work at Highgate School as Head of Strings.

Join us at the Southbank Centre!

Friday 2 February, 19.30
Royal Festival Hall
Watts, Coleridge-Taylor,
Saint-Saëns

Friday 3 May, 19.30
Queen Elizabeth Hall
Goodyear, Berlioz, Garcia

Saturday 8 June, 19.30
Queen Elizabeth Hall
Sowande, Kinoshi, Richter

**Tickets are going fast:
don't miss out!**

southbankcentre.co.uk

Chineke! Orchestra

Violin 1

Samson Diamond
 Laura Ayoub
 Alfredo Reyes Logounova
 Rebekah Reid
 Laure Chan
 Lyrit Milgram
 Blaize Henry
 Stella Di Virgilio
 Louisa Aldridge
 Kourosh Ahmadi
 Jacob Reina Caro
 Ammal Bhatia
 Shona Beecham
 Zagisha Kamil

Violin 2

Julian Gil Rodriguez
 Sofia Roldan Cativa
 Steven Crichlow
 Raye Harvey
 Cindy Foster
 Aaliyah Booker
 Cathy Fox
 Robert Miller
 Angela Antwi-Agyei
 Simon Ballard
 Charles Brookers
 Charlotte Barbour-Condini

Viola

Lena Fankhauser
 Natalie Taylor
 Natalia Senior-Brown
 Beatrice Slocumbe
 Nikki Hicks
 Alison D'Souza
 Wei Wei Tan
 Jesse Francis
 Natalia Solis Paredes
 Amirah de Bourg

Cello

Laura Anstee
 Elliott Bailey
 David Kadumukasa
 Claire Constable
 Jay Emme
 Deborah Chandler
 Meera Raja
 Niki Moosavi

Double Bass

Chi-chi Nwanoku CBE
 Charles Campbell-Peek
 Thea Sayer
 Telmo Martins
 Fabian Galeana
 Aiyana Rennie

Jazz Bass

Neil Charles

Flute

Jaymee Coonjobeeharry
 Meera Maharaj
 Deronne White

Oboe

Lorraine Hart
 Banita Wheatley-Holmes

Clarinet

Dan Bayley
 Anton Clarke-Butler
 Isha Crichlow

Bassoon

Linton Stephens
 Gordon Laing

Saxophone

Andy Panayi

French Horn

Pierre Buizer
 Derryck Nasib
 Nivanthi Karunaratne

Trumpet

Aaron Akugbo
 Gabriel Dias
 Harry Plant

Trombone

Chris Augustine
 Harry Brown

Bass Trombone

Michaias Berlouis

Tuba

Hanna Mbuya

Timpani

Paul Philbert MBE

Percussion

Sacha Johnson
 Jason Chowdhury

Electric Piano

Konya Kanneh-Mason



“That exclamation mark says it all. [Chineke!] likes to startle and amaze with the sheer joyousness of its music-making.”

The Daily Telegraph, 2023



Leader

Samson Diamond

Samson Diamond is appointed leader of the award-winning Odeion String Quartet since 2013, resident at the University of the Free State, where he is also a lecturer at the Odeion School of Music and a PhD candidate. Diamond has enjoyed an association with the London-based, Chineke! Orchestra since its inception in 2015. In April 2022, Diamond was invited back to lead the Chineke! Orchestra for their performances and recordings in London. As associate concertmaster of the newly founded Mzansi National Philharmonic Orchestra, Diamond also serves on the Artistic Planning Committee. Diamond also serves as an ex-officio board member and concertmaster for the Free State Symphony Orchestra since 2013. Since 2022 Diamond serves as a trustee for the Quartet of Peace Trust in South Africa. Diamond has appeared as a soloist with all major orchestras in South Africa, and recently appeared in the 2022 Winter Seasons for the Kwa-Zulu Natal and Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestras. A graduate of the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, where he obtained both Bachelor of Music Honours Degree First Class (2006) and his Master of Music Performance (2007) degree with distinction. Samson studied with the founder director of the internationally acclaimed Buskaid Soweto String Project, Rosemary Nalden, and further with Richard Ireland, Pauline Nobes and Philippe Griffin. Diamond has served as a jury member at prestigious national competitions in South Africa, and as a pedagogue and chamber musician, Diamond has coached the violin sections of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain (2019), the South African National Youth Orchestra, and served as a faculty member of the prestigious Stellenbosch International Chamber Music Festival 2022.

Violin I

Samson Diamond

See above

Laura Ayoub

Laura Ayoub is a Scottish/Egyptian violinist, pianist and composer. She graduated with a 1st Class Honours from the Royal College of Music in 2017 and simultaneously released her debut album alongside older sister Sarah as "The Ayoub Sisters" with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded in Abbey Road Studios. The album debuted at No.1 in the Official Classical Albums Chart and was nominated for both a Global and Classic Brit Award. TV Performance highlights for The Ayoub Sisters include: BBC Proms in the Park and the BAFTAs - as well as sell-out concerts at the Royal Albert Hall, Cairo Opera House and Dubai

Opera. The sisters performed the Egyptian National Anthem live on TV in front of H.E, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in 2018. The President later honoured them for their achievements in music. The Ayoub Sisters were also presented with an Arab Women of the Year award in 2019 for their achievement in Cultural Exchange. The Ayoub Sisters released their follow up album, "Arabesque" in August 2022. The album debuted at No.10 in the Official Classical Charts - the only independent release to enter the Top 50. Shortly after, The Ayoub Sisters were honoured to perform for HRH King Charles III at Classic FM's 30th anniversary concert in Scotland. Laura has enjoyed leading the Chineke! Orchestra for many prestigious concerts: including their debut performance at Classic FM Live at the Royal Albert Hall, and their performance in Paris for Louis Vuitton's fashion show, under the baton of Gustavo Dudamel. Laura also had the honour of joining Chineke! as a soloist for a performance of Max Richter's Recomposed Four Seasons at Live at Chelsea Festival in June 2022. Laura plays on an 1810 J.Gagliano kindly loaned to her by Florian Leonhard.

Alfredo Reyes Logounova

Alfredo was born in 1991 and raised in the beautiful Mexico City. He started his violin studies at the age of 3 with his father and mother. At the age of 6, he made his solo debut with the Mexico City Philharmonic, making him the youngest violin soloist in the history of Mexican orchestras. He was a student of the great teacher and violinist Boris Belkin in the Maastricht Conservatory and also in the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, Italy. Alfredo Reyes Logounova has played with the best Mexican orchestras and with the most recognized directors of around the world. In 2004 he made his European debut with Chiavari (Genova, Italy) with the symphonic orchestra in the Tigullio di Levante Festival, under the direction of Jan Stulen. In 2008 he participated in the IV Aram Jachaturian International Violin Competition taking the first prize. In 2014 he was invited to play in the bicentenary commemoration of the Royal Dutch Monarchy as the violin soloist, having among the audience, guests like the Duke of Luxemburg and the President of the Federal Republic of Germany. He has played as a violin soloist not only in Mexico, but in Italy, France, Netherlands, Canada, Poland, Spain, Croatia, Lithuania, Austria, Sweden, Germany and Russia, and his current repertoire goes from the baroque to the contemporary.

Rebekah Reid

Rebekah Reid is a vibrant and versatile violinist and loop pedal artist of African and Jamaican descent. Rebekah specialises in classical and jazz repertoire as well improvisation and composition.

Reid experiments with loopers and effects pedals, drawing inspiration from artists such as Bach and Paganini, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Aphex Twin, Flying Lotus and Erykah Badu. Combining electronics with traditional classical string techniques, Reid crafts unique sound worlds with her violin and a tonal narrative that captures the listeners' imagination. Rebekah has performed her solo live loop pedal set across the UK, with performances at the Portico Library in Manchester supporting Matana Roberts and Kelly Jayne Jones, Manchester Art Gallery for Sofar Sounds, and the Royal Albert Hall – the Elgar Room, in March 2019 supporting Roxanne Tattai. Rebekah also leads and manages TÄPP, a dynamic loop pedal music collective featuring collaborations with musicians from London and Manchester. TÄPP have featured on Worldwide FM, BBC Introducing, were runners up for the Nonclassical 'Battle of the Bands' 2018 and were Jazz North artists 2018- 2019. Rebekah plays a Johann Karl Klotz violin from 1786, Germany, kindly on loan from the HarrisonFrank Family Foundation

Laure Chan

British Franco-Chinese violinist Laure Chan has performed throughout Europe, Asia and the Americas and has been invited as a recitalist and concerto soloist in prominent venues including London's Cadogan Hall, Paris Opéra Bastille and Florence Opera House. Developing an interest in composition, Laure aims to combine her classical background with inspirations of multiple genres and cultures. Her music has caught the attention of artists such as Nicola Benedetti and Isabelle Van Keulen as well as organisations including Universal Music Group, Audio Network and Out-Standard. Since 2019, Laure has released recordings on multiple streaming platforms including two EPs — "Air" and "Souvenirs" — featuring her compositions and her debut album "Tribute to Bach" featuring iconic works by Bach as well as her original compositions inspired by the composer. Laure's second album was recorded on January 2023 at Abbey Road Studios featuring Schumann's violin concerto with the Sinfonia Perdita conducted by Daniel Hogan. The album will be released later this year. Her awards include the Music Director's Award of the Oxford Philharmonic (2010), and solo prizes at the Royal Academy of Music and Royal College of Music. An advocate of musical education, Laure became an Ambassador for "The Benedetti Foundation" in 2020, providing workshops for string players worldwide. Laure has been a member of the Chineke! Orchestra since 2020.

Lyrít Milgram

Canadian violinist Lyrít Milgram moved to the UK to study with Itzhak Rashkovsky at the Purcell School. She then completed her Bachelor and Masters degrees at the Royal College of Music and Guildhall School of Music and Drama respectively. Since then Lyrít has been freelancing all over the UK and has performed in most of the major concert halls in the UK and Europe as well as many in Asia, North and South America as well. She works regularly with the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra and BBC Symphony Orchestra as well as many others. Aside from music, Lyrít has a keen interest in psychology, loves travelling and her cat Patsy.

Blaize Henry

Blaize Henry was born to Guyanese parents in Bromley, south-east London, and has been playing the violin since the age of seven. Blaize studied at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester under Steve Wilkie, and during his studies performed in several masterclasses with eminent violinists such as Yair Kless, Pavel Fischer and Gina McCormack. As a chamber musician he has performed at the Cadogan Hall, Aldeburgh Festival and Cardiff Millennium centre, and he is a Junior Fellow of the Pro Corda International Chamber Music Academy, where he works as a teacher, chamber music coach, adjudicator and conductor.

Stella Di Virgilio

Stella Di Virgilio is an Italian violinist based in London. Since finishing her studies at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, she has been freelancing with many ensembles around the UK and abroad, as well as performing in music festivals including St Endellion Festival (Cornwall), Nevill Holt Opera, Pärnu Music Festival (Estonia) and Aurora Chamber Music Festival (Vänernsborg, Sweden). She has worked with orchestras such as the Britten Sinfonia, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, London Mozart Players, London Chamber Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra and English National Ballet Philharmonic. Stella has a real passion for the operatic repertoire and, over the years, has worked with artists including Martyn Brabbins, Sarah Connolly, Roderick Williams, Anne Sophie Von Otter, Mark Padmore and Danielle De Niese. For the last couple of years, she has worked with Carlo Rizzi and Opera Rara, including playing for a recording of Mercadante's *Il Proscritto*, which won an International Opera Award in 2023. She also performed at Opera Holland Park for the launch of SWAP'ra, a charity whose focus is to support and empower women in the opera industry. Stella is also a keen teacher

and workshop leader, and she is the orchestral manager of Street Orchestra Live, an outreach orchestra committed to bringing different styles of orchestral music (ranging from Haydn and Mozart to Led Zeppelin and Snoop Dogg!) away from concert halls and onto a wide range of public spaces such as parks and streets, hospitals, nursing homes, detention centres and prisons.

Louisa Aldridge

Louisa Aldridge was born in London and studied at Manchester University where she obtained a first class degree in Music, followed by postgraduate study in London with Hugh Bean CBE. She has worked and travelled extensively in East Asia (Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra) and with various UK orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and BBC National Orchestra of Wales. Other work includes film sessions and the occasional pop tour. Alongside violin work, she teaches regular yoga and birth preparation classes to pregnant women, helping those facing structural inequalities to access the services and support they need.

Kourosh Ahmadi

Kourosh is a student studying violin performance at the Royal Northern College of Music. He has been playing the violin for most of his life and has performed with professional orchestras such as the Chineke! Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, of which he has been a member for the past 2 years. He has also performed in string quartets at concerts on numerous occasions, as well as performing solo with orchestras such as The Dame Alice Owens Symphony Orchestra

Jacob Reina Caro

Spanish born violinist, at the age of 18, he became the youngest member of Malaga Philharmonic Orchestra and youngest Guest Concertmaster of Malaga Symphony Orchestra. He is regular guest Concertmaster/Director of London Concertante and European Union Chamber Orchestra. Jacob has performed in orchestras including Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Contemporary Orchestra, Cairo Symphony Orchestra, City of Granada Symphony Orchestra, Hong Kong Chamber Orchestra etc. He has been violin and chamber music professor at the International Music Academy in Hong Kong. Jacob plays in a fine Italian violin made by Stefano Scarpella in 1908.

Ammal Bhatia

Ammal Bhatia is a conductor, violinist, and recent graduate from the Royal Northern College of Music. Ammal has learnt privately with Sian Edwards and Peter Stark and trained as a violinist with Steve Wilkie. Ammal is a laureate of the Second Lake Como International Conducting Competition and 2023 Bucharest Music Institute Conducting Competition. Ammal established his own orchestra in May 2021, and is the Artistic Director and Founder of the Carme Ensemble. This project-by-project orchestra based in Manchester has received high praise and multiple awards, including appearing on Classic FM. Ammal was recently awarded a place as assistant conductor to Toby Purser on Vienna Opera Academy. Passionate about contemporary music, Ammal will be working with the London Sinfonietta and he will be the conductor of the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group NEXT Programme 23/24. Ammal has also received world class tuition from Mark Heron, Clark Rundell, Ben Gernon and Manoj Kamps. Ammal have been privileged to assist Henk Guittart and observe Sir Mark Elder, Antony Hermus, and Martin Brabbins. Ammal has played with Chineke! Orchestra, and side-by-side projects with Manchester Collective and the Hallé. He co-founded the Franco-Mendes Quartet when at the RNCM. The Quartet has received high praise for their daring and contemporary performance style, and they have been fortunate enough to study with the Elias Quartet, Trio Gaspard, Trio Karenine, Piatti Quartet Talich Quartet and Magnus Johnston. He is Co-Director of the Enys Chamber Music Festival.

Shona Beecham

Shona is a promising 20-year-old violinist who has already performed at venues in the UK including Aylesbury Proms, Cadogan Hall, Kensington Palace, Eltham Palace, Hatfield House, Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Spencer Hall, The Oval, Guildhall, Purcell Room, BBC Proms and The Palladium. Her international activities have seen her perform in the USA in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Switzerland, France, Austria, Poland, Bulgaria and Germany and she has also won first prize in several competitions and festivals in the UK and abroad. She regularly performs at various fundraising events in the UK including fundraising for the National Autistic Society. Recently she also led the Chineke! Junior Orchestra in their audition on national TV in Britain's Got Talent and on their first ever European tour. Shona is currently studying her BMus at the Royal College of Music with Prof. Itzhak Rashkovsky, having started two years early.

Zagisha Kamil

Zagisha Kamil is a London based violinist who has performed throughout the US and internationally. She gave solo performances at venues like the Permanent Mission of the State of Kuwait for the United Nations, the Brooklyn Borough Hall where she performed for Eric Adams - the current New York City mayor, solo recital at the Shandeele Music Festival in New York and solo performances in Italy at Laguna D'Arte festival. Zagisha performed as a soloist with the Kazakh National Orchestra and Camerata Kazakhstan a few times. Zagisha's musical highlights include performances in Carnegie Hall, Israeli Opera, performances for BBC Radio 3, orchestral debuts at Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Cadogan Hall and others. She collaborated with artists and conductors such as Leonard Slatkin, Kent Tritle, Max Richter, Wolfram Koessel, Alexander Markov and others. Zagisha is a prize winner of the Giovani Talenti International Competition in Italy, Astana MereiInternational violin competition and Leonid Kogan competition in Brussels. Born in Almaty, Kazakhstan, Zagisha was a distinguished recipient of the Helen Airoff Dowling Scholarship at Manhattan School of Music and the New School in New York City where she completed her Bachelor and Master degrees in the studio of Shmuel Ashkenasi.

Violin 2

Julian Gil Rodriguez

A violinist from Bogotá, Colombia, Julián Gil Rodríguez has held positions in the Orquesta Sinfónica de Colombia, Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, Spain, and since 2013 is a proud member of the LSO, with whom he has had the pleasure of travelling the world making music. Julián tremendously enjoys the popular music scene which has led him to perform in London venues such as Ronnie Scott's and Jazz Café. In his free time he can be found on his bike trying to keep up with his friends.

Sofia Roldan Cativa

Steven Crichlow

Violinist Steven Crichlow has played with Chineke! Orchestra from the beginning. He has held positions in the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera and the Junior Departments at both the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and the Royal Academy of Music. He now freelances with several leading British orchestras and plays in recording sessions for the Film and Pop Music Industries.

Raye Harvey

Raye Harvey (LRSM) is a Manchester-based violinist and singer and a graduate of the RNCM.

Having completed an instrumental PGCEi with Music Masters and BCU in 2021, Raye is the 2022 Spitalfields and Orchestras Live Trainee Music Leader, and was recently invited to become an Arts and Culture Ambassador for the GLF Community Fund. Coming from a large Indian-Caribbean family, Raye has a strong interest in travel and collaboration. She works extensively as a session and orchestral musician, having performed with the exciting Garage Classical project, at the BRIT awards, on the Brand New Heavies newest album and internationally with the Chineke! Orchestra. Memorable performances include the Royal Albert Hall, the Louis Vuitton Men's Fashion Show Paris 2022, Abbey Road Studios and Concertgebouw Amsterdam. Raye recently released her self-titled EP "Lakshmi", and was made BBC Introducing Hereford and Worcester's Artist of the Week.

Cindy Foster

Cindy Foster is a freelance violinist, based in London. Cindy studied as a Foundation Scholar at the Royal College of Music, during which time she won several prizes and was awarded a Countess of Munster scholarship for further study. Cindy led the Scottish Ballet Orchestra for a season, joined EUYO, going on to become a founder member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. Cindy was also a 1st violin member of the London Philharmonic. After leaving the LPO to pursue a freelance career, Cindy worked mostly with the London Symphony Orchestra and London Sinfonietta, whilst also being guest principal in numerous orchestras, including Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Halle, BBC Scottish, Liverpool Philharmonic, BBC Concert Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony and LPO. Cindy has held a teaching post at the RCM junior department. She has also worked extensively recording music for films and television, playing in backing groups for various popular artists, and in West End shows, including Crazy For You, Phantom of the Opera and Hamilton. Cindy currently mainly works with the LSO, Philharmonia, BBC Symphony and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and, in her spare time enjoys cinema, opera and hanging out with her sons.

Aaliyah Booker

Aaliyah Booker is an award-winning violinist and music educator from the US. She has performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, Washington Monument, the National Arts Centre, Sheldonian Theatre, The Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall and the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Booker graduated summa cum laude from The Hartt School, University of Hartford in 2019. That year, Booker was awarded the John G. Martin Scholarship in recognition of her academic

achievement and went on to pursue further study at the University of Oxford. She completed an MPhil in Music Performance with a distinction from Oxford in 2021. Booker teaches at The Royal Academy of Music as a Strings Fellow for the First Strings Experience and at The Yehudi Menuhin School for their Early Years Programme. She is a participant of the London Symphony Orchestra Pathways scheme. She started playing with the Chineke! Orchestra in Spring 2023. Recent highlights have included playing with the London Contemporary Orchestra, The Guildhall Session Orchestra, The Pegasus Opera Company and Netflix's Queen Charlotte's Global Orchestra alongside the Grammy award-winning singer Alicia Keys. Booker plays a Jules Grandj on violin, generously loaned to her from The Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain.

Cathy Fox

Cathy studied the violin at Trinity College of Music where she enjoyed a broad curriculum taking modules in music therapy and Kodaly. This has allowed Cathy to build a career combining performance and teaching specialising in Kodaly and Colourstrings. She currently teaches at Centre for Young Musicians and privately. Cathy's favourite performance work is to play in an orchestra as she loves being part of a group that is creating something beautiful and working towards the same vision. She is currently performing regularly with BBC National Orchestra of Wales and has been a freelance violinist with LPO for 15 years. As a solo violinist, Cathy has performed with the Royal Shakespeare Company and has been the timekeeper for The Moth in the Union Chapel and the Bridge Theatre.

Robert Miller

Robert is a violinist of Trinidadian and British descent who trained at the Royal College of Music for four years where he completed his undergraduate degree and has been a member of Chineke! Since 2015. As well as being a member of Chineke!, he regularly freelances in various other orchestras in London and around the UK. He has performed in some of the world's best concert venues under the baton of many renowned conductors such as Vasily Petrenko, Sir Colin Davis, Vladimir Jurowski and John Wilson, to name a few. As well as classical repertoire, Robert also regularly enjoys playing alongside pop artists which have included Beyonce, Stormzy and Grace Jones.

Angela Antwi-Agyei

Angela Antwi-Agyei is of Russian Siberian and Ghanaian descent and born in the UK. She has studied Violin and Piano from the age of seven. Angela was awarded funding from the Foundation for the Sports and the Arts to obtain her violin

to help further her studies at the age of 18. After graduating from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire she continued with Advanced Violin performance studies with Anna Mihailovna at Odessa State Academy of Music in Ukraine. She has also studied with Marat Bisengaliyev, Shamil Rashidov, Peter Thomas and Louis Carus. She is a talented and versatile musician whose career includes film, radio, commercial and television music. Angela had played with many professional orchestras over the years. She has been invited to play with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Odessa Opera House Orchestra-Ukraine, London Sinfonietta, Multi Storey Orchestra, Sinfonia Viva, Urban Soul Orchestra and Reggae Philharmonic Orchestra. Angela has performed as a soloist and section violinist for numerous other chamber ensembles in the UK and internationally at venues such as Odessa and Venice Opera Houses, KKL Lucerne, Royal Albert Hall London, De Doelen Rotterdam, Royal Festival Hall London, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Symphony Hall Birmingham and Musiikkitalo Helsinki. She has also performed with artists like Alicia Keys, Grace Jones, Skip Marley, Maxi Priest and Ruby Turner. She has played in Verbier, Aix-en-Provence, Proms, and Schleswig-Holstein music festivals. She is also a committed and active music educator and conductor who has taught children the violin across the country in some of the most deprived areas of the UK and inspired people to study music. Angela has been an adjudicator for Violin students at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. She has partially deaf and blind students and has taught in different languages.

Simon Ballard

Simon has a varied musical career, having performed around the U.K., Europe and China in a range of groups that include; string quartets, baroque ensembles and symphony orchestras. Away from music, Simon is also a photographer and is currently training to be a person-centered counsellor.

Charles Brookers

British-violinist Charles Brookes has been fortunate to study with some of the UK's finest violinists, including Lucy Gould (Gould Piano Trio) and Itzhak Rashkovsky at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and Joshua Fisher and Alexander Sitkovetsky during his Master's degree at the Royal Academy of Music in London. At both RWCMD and the Academy, Charles was selected as a member of their respective String Soloist ensembles where he closely collaborated with artists including Henning Kraggerud, Adrian Brendel and Clio Gould for events at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Buckingham Palace. Throughout his studies, Charles was generously supported by the Elmley Foundation,

Clive and Sylvia Richards Charity, EMI Music Sound Foundation and the Royal Philharmonic Society. Charles enjoys a varied career of teaching and freelancing with ensembles including the English National Ballet, Welsh National Opera, Ulster Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, European Union Chamber Orchestra and English Symphony Orchestra. Charles is the founder of Elgar Ensemble, a group which champions 20th century British composers (elgarensemble.com).

Charlotte Barbour-Condini

After reading History at UCL, Charlotte was awarded a postgraduate scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, where she studied recorder with Anna Stegmann and violin with Nicolette Moonen. She has performed with Chineke! since its foundation in 2015. A keen ensemble player, Charlotte co-founded Parandrus in 2017, a group specialising in medieval, renaissance and contemporary music. In addition to performing, Charlotte is a programme annotator for the Chineke! Orchestra, has twice been a guest presenter on BBC Radio 3's 'Inside Music', and is a broadcast assistant with Tandem Productions.

Viola

Lena Fankhauser

Lena Fankhauser is a native of Montreal, Quebec, Canada. As a full scholarship recipient, she graduated in 2002 from the Juilliard School in New York City with a Master of Music degree. She has also received a Bachelor's degree from the Juilliard School. Lena then completed the post-graduate course at the Mozarteum in Salzburg with Professor Thomas Riebl. In 2000 she was a top-prize winner of the Sphinx competition and featured in a televised PBS documentary. She is the founder and artistic director of the chamber music festivals in Bad Ischl and Mariazell and is the president of (CH)AMBER - the association for new chamber music. She plays with Volkskoper Vienna, Camerata Salzburg, Vienna Chamber Orchestra and Klangforum Vienna. She also plays often with the Camerata Salzburg. She has also played with Salzburg Chamber Soloists, Kontrapunkte and the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Vienna (RSO).

Natalie Taylor

Natalie was born and raised in Tottenham, North London. She took up the violin aged 8 (thanks to fantastic peripatetic teaching available at the time!) and switched to the viola aged 12; two years later she gained a place at the RCM Junior Department. She went on to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama under Amanda Denley, developing her skills both as a chamber musician and orchestral player. After graduating, Natalie successfully trialled for a job with the

BBC Symphony Orchestra where she has been a member for nearly 30 years. With them she enjoys a variety of work including performances at the Proms, the Barbican and around the UK and has toured extensively across Europe, the USA, Asia and Australia. Natalie's career has seen her work with many other performing groups - LSO, Rambert Dance Company, Guy Barker's Big Band, Jules Buckley Orchestra - as well as artists such as Coldplay, Grace Jones, Dizzee Rascal and Stormzy. Her recording work includes many film soundtracks and pop & classical recordings. Natalie has been a member of Chineke! since its inauguration in 2015 and continues to perform with them both at home and abroad.

Natalia Senior-Brown

Born in Manchester, Natalia began playing the violin at age 7 before attending Chetham's School of Music for nine years and switching to the viola in her fifth year. There, she played in Chetham's Symphony Orchestra until her final year (in which she led the viola section), and was also a part of the National Youth Orchestra 2014. In the same year she also achieved her ABRSM Performance Diploma with Distinction. She obtained her Masters degree with Distinction in 2019 under the tutelage of Susie Meszaros at the Royal Northern College of Music, where she also completed her Bachelors degree. During her studies there she was so fortunate as to complete her orchestral work experience with the BBC Philharmonic and win first prize in the RNCM Viola Prize competition. Natalia is an avid orchestral, session and chamber music player. She has and continues to perform with orchestras such as the Chineke! Orchestra and BBC Philharmonic in renowned venues like The Royal Albert Hall, has played for a number of artists, tv shows and films including Ed Sheeran, Adele, The Graham Norton Show and The Voice UK and has travelled across the world as far as China, Australia and the US as part of her career so far.

Beatrice Slocumbe

Beatrice Slocumbe is a Black British violist studying on a full scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music, with her professor Jon Thorne. At Academy she has played in projects led by Sir Mark Elder, Semyon Bychkov, Edward Gardner and Rachel Podger. In 2019/20 she joined the London Philharmonic Orchestra's Junior Artists Programme and played with the LPO in their Bright Sparks Concert. She has also taken part in the ENO's Noyes Fludde production. Beatrice has been Viola principal of the Brixton Chamber Orchestra where they play pop, rap, disco and classical arrangements to audiences around Lambeth. Combining her love for music and dance (which

she does in styles of commercial, contemporary and afro fusion), she has recently explored playing viola and dancing together in a music video for singer-songwriter Silas Armstrong's 'I'm Not Ok'. Beatrice joined the Chineke! Orchestra in early 2022. She has enjoyed playing with the orchestra at the BBC Proms and in performances with Max Richter, Stormzy and Skip Marley in venues like the Concertgebouw and Royal Festival Hall, also appearing on BBC Four and Netflix. Last year she received second prize in the D'addario String Prize performing solo works for viola by Rawsthorne and Bowen. In January her quartet performed in RAM's Students Create Festival in their concert 'Unapologetic', programming works by Hailstork, Shaw and Muhly. Next year she looks forward to exciting projects with her harp trio and flute trio and solo performances including Franck sonata. Beatrice also continues to study Baroque Viola.

Nikki Hicks

Viola player Nicola Hicks enjoys a very active freelance career engaging in chamber ensembles, orchestras, and recording sessions. Nicola's orchestral engagements include performances at the Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Royal Concertgebouw, Netherlands, and Lincoln Center, New York City. During Nicola's studies in both UK and USA, her primary professors were Dr Louise Lansdown and Dr Timothy Deighton. In addition to the Western classical canon, Nicola has explored experimental compositions that combine instrumental performance with electronics, visual arts, and graphic scores. Having recently rediscovered her own enthusiasm for composing, Nicola is toiling at several new writing projects which will be unveiled later this year. As a committed pedagogue, Nicola is Head of Strings at a boarding school and also maintains a private studio of students in London.

Alison D'Souza

Londoner Alison D'Souza is of Goan/Irish descent and currently resides in Deptford. Since graduating from the Royal Academy of Music (MA) and her undergraduate degree at the Royal College of Music, Alison has performed with various professional orchestras including Welsh National Opera, RTÉ Symphony orchestra and top national ballet companies playing at the Coliseum and Sadlers Wells. She regularly plays with the London Contemporary orchestra (solo viola with Moor Mother, Cobey Sey, CKTRL @ southbank's recent Meltdown Festival) Outlook Festival orchestra (David Rodigan/Fabio and Grooverider/Dizzie Rascal) and has recorded various film soundtracks including Matrix 4, Assassin's Creed as well as Steve McQueen's Small Axe series and the latest albums of Thom Yorke. Alison performs with Chineke!

Orchestra at the BBC Proms annually, tours the UK with folk/electronic band The Little Unsaid, writes/performs her own music with newly formed female electronic duo Tvoya (both Glastonbury festival). This year Alison played in the sell out theatre production of 'A little Life' in the west end, toured Europe with Sigór Ros and recorded the music for the new Pet Shop Boys album.

Wei Wei Tan

Wei Wei won the Howard Hanson scholarship to study at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and graduated with Distinction. Subsequently, she completed her Postgraduate Diploma at the Royal Academy of Music studying with Matthew Souter and Baroque viola with Katherine McGillivray. As an orchestral player, she has worked under conductors such as Mendi Rodin, Edward Gardner, Yuri Termikanov, Vernon Handley and Sir Colin Davis. Wei Wei is also experienced in period performance, having studied baroque viola with Katherine McGillivray at the Royal Academy of Music. During her time with Southbank Sinfonia (SbS) as rotating principal, she played in Side-by-Side concerts with the Academy of St Martin-in-the-fields, the Royal Opera House Orchestra and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. She performed a solo concerto with the orchestra, as well as chamber concerts in the Linbury Studio and Crush Room at the Royal Opera House.

Jesse Francis

British musician, Violist, composer, and songwriter Jesse Francis joined Chineke! when it was founded in 2015. He studied at Chetham's School of Music and is currently a scholar at the Royal College of Music in his final year. In 2019, Jesse signed with Warner Music, creating hip-hop/rap music with a twist by adding the Viola to the mix and has written music that has recently been aired live across the BBC TV network. Jesse isn't just a musical artist, as he found a passion for painting. Jesse says, "Illuminating experiences through music and art give more perspective to the world." Jesse performed with the Chineke! quartet at Buckingham Palace for HRH King Charles. He says, "Chineke! is changing the world of classical music. It has changed my experience and will impact the next generation of musicians."

Natalia Solis Paredes

Natalia Solis Paredes is a Mexican violist based in the UK. She commenced her musical education in Mexico and later moved to the UK to obtain her Master's degree and Professional Diploma at the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance under the guidance of Richard Crabtree, with the generous support of the Cordelia Moses,

Tim and Jay Newling, Loveday, and Trinity College scholarships. She is a founding member of the Waldstein Quartet and has performance with major orchestras in the UK such as the BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and the Chineke! Orchestra, among others. She has also recorded film scores at Abbey Road studios with the London Contemporary Orchestra. With the Waldstein Quartet, Natalia has performed at the Wigmore Hall, St. John's Square, St. James Piccadilly, as well as being a debut artist at the Lake District Summer Music Festival in 2022. Currently, she is a fellow with the Waldstein Quartet at the Trinity Laban Conservatoire and is on trial with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Amirah de Bourg

Amirah is currently a session musician located in North London. She plays violin and viola across many genres and has worked with the likes of Wu-Lu, FAUZIA, Louis Culture and Nightmares on Wax, for which she assisted the musical director for their 2022 Glastonbury performance on the West Holts stage. She first learnt the violin with her teacher Nigel Goldberg, and returned for further tutelage on the viola years later. Recently, she played in Netflix's Queen Charlotte's Global Orchestra alongside Alicia Keys, and gave her first concert with Chineke! celebrating the 75th Anniversary of Windrush at the Royal Albert Hall.

Cello

Laura Anstee

Laura holds a 1st class BMus degree and a Dip. RAM for achieving one of the highest grades in her year from the Royal Academy of Music. She has since been awarded the title of Associate of the Royal Academy for her ongoing contribution to the Music Industry. To date she has collaborated with many major talents in the Performing Arts ranging from Classical, West End, World and Pop music through to Contemporary Dance. To name a few Laura has performed as cellist with the BBC Symphony and Concert Orchestras, Les Misérables (in the West End) and with numerous artists including Beyonce, Bjork and Adele. She has also toured extensively with renowned dancers Akram Khan, Hofesh Shechter and Sylvie Guillem.

Elliott Bailey

Elliott Bailey is a freelance cellist based in London. Recently graduating from the Royal Academy of Music where his string quartet held the chamber music scholarship, he has freelanced with the London Mozart Players, The Hallé, Northern Chamber Orchestra (as principal cello), and Chineke! amongst others, which has taken him on international tours to the US - most notably

PLAYER BIOGRAPHIES

Lincoln Center, and all around Europe. Elliott plays regular radio broadcasted concerts and plays in the BBC Proms each year. He has recorded for TV shows such as the Graham Norton Show, and for soundtracks such as Luther, and plays chamber music around the country, most recently at Wigmore Hall with renowned double bass player Leon Bosch.

David Kadumukasa

David is a London based freelance cellist and teacher. Since graduating from the University of Manchester and Royal College of Music he has played with orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, RTE National Orchestra of Ireland and the more recently founded Chineke! Orchestra. As soloist he has performed Dvorak, Elgar & Panufnik cello concertos. David has also worked in theatre, performing in productions at the National Theatre and Sadler's Wells. He has recorded and performed with leading figures from the world of jazz including Denys Baptiste and legendary artists from the pop arena such as Annie Lennox and Jerry Dammers of The Specials.

Claire Constable

Claire Constable studied music at Birmingham University and Kings College London University, before attending the Royal College of Music studying cello with Christopher Bunting. She has since enjoyed freelancing in the UK and sometimes beyond, regularly playing with English National Ballet, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and CBSO including tours of Europe, plus recent work with RSN0 , English Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Swan, London Concert Orchestra ,and numerous others. As well as orchestral freelancing, she enjoys playing for opera and shows ,including a 4 month tour of China with "Ghost the Musical", participating in the Riyadh International Opera festival with NSO, playing in various West End shows , Carl Rosa Opera and most recently the Bootleg Beatles on tour.

Jay Emme

Born, raised and trained in Birmingham UK, Jay began her cello journey at the age of 6, and knew immediately that she had found her passion. She joined her first orchestra at 8 and was awarded her first principal cello position at 11. With a distinction level Masters in music performance, Jay thoroughly enjoys honing and sharing her skills, and now travels the world as a solo luxury weddings and events cellist. Outside of her wedding adventures, she is often invited to work and perform with many orchestras and ensembles around the UK, from local ensembles through to professional orchestras. Jay has also had the pleasure of being invited to speak and perform at events in the UK, the USA,

Canada, and the Caribbean. Jay loves to provide backing strings support for various artists in all genres. She worked with numerous musicians for professional recordings and live performances, and has provided both visual and audio support for promo sessions. Some of these clients include the BBC R4, BBC R3, BBC World Service, Netflix, Heart Radio, The Times, and various artists such as Alicia Keys, Akash Odedra, Amanda Holden, Ebony Bones, Bonaventura Bottone, Tiana Major9, and more.

Deborah Chandler

Deborah Chandler is a busy freelancer based in East London. She performs regularly with several orchestras including BBC Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Opera North and is in demand as guest principal and chamber musician for freelance orchestras and sessions. She also teaches and has 2 young children. Deborah studied at the Royal Northern College of Music with Emma Ferrand and plays on a William Forster cello made in 1777.

Meera Raja

British-Indian cellist Meera Priyanka Raja studied at the Royal College of Music with Professor Alexander Chaushian. She was supported by the Musicians' Company Lambert Scholarship and was a Help Musicians UK Postgraduate Award Holder. Meera graduated the RCM in 2020 with a Masters degree (distinction) and is currently a Musician's Company Young Artist. As a soloist, Meera has performed across the country and Europe in venues including the Royal Festival Hall, Drapers Hall and St. James's Church Piccadilly. Her experience in Indian Classical Music has led her to play on the album, 'Essence of Raga Tala. An experienced chamber musician, Meera regularly performs with her piano trio. They have performed at venues across London and Europe and reached the semi-finals of the Royal Overseas League Chamber Music Competition. They were invited to hold a residency at 'Music at Brel', Roquecor. She has performed in festivals including the Buxton International Festival, British Isles Music Festival, Sacconi Chamber Music Festival, Buckingham Palace Coronation Festival. Meera recently took part in the London Sinfonietta Academy and Cello Akademie Rutesheim in the class of Jens Peter Maintz. As an orchestral player, Meera has led various projects at the RCM and was selected to perform in a 'United Europe' tour with concerts in Berlin and Rotterdam as well as joining the Symphony Orchestra of India for concerts in Mumbai and their UK tour. She is a member of Chineke! Orchestra - Europe's first majority-Black, Asian and ethnically diverse orchestra. Meera regularly performs with Her Ensemble, UK's

first women and non-binary orchestra, shining a light on female composers from the past, whilst working with current artists today who share their ethos. Meera played in the award-winning West End Musical 'Bend it like Beckham' and New Musical, 'Beyond the Fence.' She subsequently performed as a solo cellist in a touring theatre production of E.M. Forster's novel 'A Passage to India.' She has performed live on BBC radio3's 'In Tune' programme with composer and tabla player Kuljit Bhamra MBE. She was the solo cellist for a livestream one-woman show 'Illusions of Liberty', raising awareness of invisible illness. Meera performed in Lambert Jackson's productions of 'Camelot' and 'Songs for a New World' at the London Palladium and is currently playing in the new musical 'Broken Wings' at the Charing Cross theatre. Meera has a passion for teaching and outreach work. As well as teaching privately, she teaches at Bancroft's School, Gatehouse School and the London Youth Conservatoire. Meera strongly believes every child is deserving of a musical education.

Niki Moosavi

Iranian Cellist Niki Moosavi graduated from the Royal College of Music in 2021 with First Class Honours. In her final year she held the position of Diversity Officer for the Students' Union. Her work saw changes in curriculum and artistic programming, including curating the first Black History Month concert at RCM. Outside of RCM, she lead the undergraduates group of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Music Studies network (EDIMS). Upon graduating, she received funding to create 97 Ensemble, a group of musicians raising awareness to the statistic that 97% of women aged 18-24 experience sexual harassment in the UK. The ensemble raised over £500 for Solace Women's Aid in their debut concert and have gone on to perform at the Elgar Room and St James's Piccadilly. Niki is currently studying a master's degree at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Tim Lowe, supported by a scholarship.

Double Bass Chi-Chi Nwanoku

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Charles Campbell-Peek:

Charles Campbell-Peek started his musical career on the piano at age 5, and picked up the Double Bass 2 years later. Since then, he has learnt various instruments, and continues his lessons on the Double Bass with Tony Hougham and Violin lessons on a Saturday through Junior Guildhall. In his first year playing the Double Bass he was invited to play Elgar's Nimrod alongside the LSO at the Opening Ceremony of the London

Olympics. The following year, he was fortunate enough to have been given a Mayor's Music Fund scholarship, which has helped him enormously. It was at the awards ceremony where he first met Chi-chi Nwanoku OBE. He led the Double Bass section of NCO for the entire 4 years of his membership of the orchestra, and is now in his third year with the National Youth Orchestra. He has been a part of the Chineke! Junior Orchestra since 2015 and is tremendously grateful for the opportunity to play with their Senior Orchestra sometimes.

Thea Sayer

Thea, 21, is in her final year of her undergraduate degree at the Royal Academy of Music studying classical double bass on a scholarship. Here she is being taught by Graham Mitchell, Tom Goodman and Dominic Seldis, and has had the opportunities to play in masterclasses with the likes of Božo Paradžik and Joel Quarrington. She is the youngest of four children, from a mixed Nigerian and English heritage. Before studying in London, Thea earned a place in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain where she played in her first BBC Proms concert at the Royal Albert Hall, in addition to playing in other incredible concert halls around the UK like the Barbican, Bridgewater Hall and Birmingham Symphony Hall. In 2017, she became one of the first London Philharmonic Orchestra Junior Artists and since has enjoyed going back to help tutor with more Junior Artists events like their 'Overture' days. She relished playing in Chineke! Junior Orchestra before featuring more recently in the Chineke! Orchestra for their first UK and European tours as well as recordings at the prestigious Abbey Road Studios.

Telmo Martins

Born in Portugal, Telmo Martins is a double bassist and educator (with Bridgend Music Services) currently based in South Wales with a master's degree in performance from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD). He previously studied at Escola Profissional da Metropolitana and Escola Superior de Música de Lisboa in Portugal. Telmo has won scholarships through Fundação Share and RWCMD. As a performer Telmo plays with BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Chineke! Orchestra, Bristol Ensemble, RWCMD Symphony Orchestra, Brecknock Sinfonia, Welsh Musical Theatre Orchestra and London Concert Orchestra. He regularly plays with Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra and City of Cardiff Symphony Orchestra. Telmo has performed in a variety of prestigious venues across Europe under the El Sistema Portugal - Orquestra Geração. Recent performances include his first debut as soloist with Brecknock Sinfonia,

Brits Awards with Chineke Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, WYNNE Evans and Central England Camerata.

Fabian Galeana

Fabián Galeana was born on October 18th 1995 in Iztacalco, Mexico City. He started his musical life at the age of 12 years, his father taught him how to play guitar. A couple of years later, Fabian started his studies on double bass. On September 2010, he was accepted at Life and Movement Music School from the Cultural Center Ollin Yoliztli in Mexico City, where he completed his bachelor degree under the teaching of his beloved teacher, Alexei Diorditsa. In 2019 he was accepted for doing a masters degree on Double Bass Performance at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London, United Kingdom, as an student of the great teachers Luis Cabrera, Rinat Ibragimov and Jose Moreira. He has been part of masterclasses with teachers as Giuseppe Ettorre, Joel Quarrington, Nikita Noumov. He also has played with orchestras as Chineke! Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra, London Musical Theatre Orchestra, Guildhall Symphony Orchestra, among others.

Aiyana Rennie

Aiyana Rennie is an undergraduate at the Royal College of Music in London an RCM Scholar she studies with Rodrigo Moro Martin and Enno Senft. Aiyana began learning the double bass when she was 9 years old at the RCM Junior Department as a member of the Mini Bass Programme. When she turned 12, she attended the Yehudi Menuhin School and in 2020 continued her studies at Chetham's School of Music. In 2020 Aiyana successfully auditioned for the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and remained a member for four consecutive years. That same year, Aiyana was one of eight young musicians selected to be a London Philharmonic Orchestra Junior Artist. Aiyana's expertise and extensive experience for her age are widely acknowledged. She was awarded 2nd Prize in the Cello & Double Bass Category of the 2022 Radda Rise International String Competition and was selected for the Category Audition round of BBC Young Musician 2022. In 2023 Aiyana completed the Professional Development programme with the Consortium of Orchestras together with BLIM, the National Symphony Orchestra Summer Music Institute in Washington DC and was recently selected for the Royal Opera House Overture, Aiyana will be mentored by ROH Principal Marco Behntash.

Jazz Bass

Neil Charles

Neil Charles is one of the most in-demand musicians on the scene, with a huge array of credits to his name, including Jack DeJohnette, the Sun Ra Arkestra, Mingus Big Band, Jose James, Jerry Dammers, Courtney Pine, and Terence Blanchard. His own projects have included Zed U, with Shabaka Hutchings and Tom Skinner, and the more recent ensemble Dark Days, dealing with the work of James Baldwin. Most recently, he has been heard across the international scene with Gabriels. As well as being known as a bass player with a huge sound and immaculate sense of time, he is equally renowned as a producer, going by the alias Ben Marc.

Flute

Jaymee Coonjoebeeharry

Jaymee Coonjoebeeharry enjoys a busy freelance career that includes playing in orchestras such as the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the English National Opera, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, and the Chineke! Orchestra. After graduating from Oxford University with a Double First Class Masters in Chemistry, he undertook his musical studies at the Royal College of Music, where he was the Constant and Kit Lambert Junior Fellow in his final year and was subsequently made a Yeoman of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. Alongside his musical career, Jaymee pursues a doctorate in Computational Chemistry at University College London under Professor Graham Worth. Jaymee enjoys a diverse musical life. He has worked in close collaboration with composers who have written works for him, including a Flute Concerto by Hamish Brown and a Flute Sonata by Guy Newbury. He is regularly invited by orchestras to perform as a concerto soloist on the flute and piccolo, and has performed alongside Swedish Flute virtuoso Göran Marcusson. Jaymee's musical interests extend to jazz and he was the flute player in the National Youth Jazz Orchestra for 3 years. Jaymee's most recent solo engagements include a performance of Vivaldi's Flute Concerto La Notte in Kings Place, and a performance of The Flight of Bumblebee with pianist and duo partner Frederic Bager, released by Classic FM on social media, which has received over 500,000 views to date.

Meera Maharaj

Meera Maharaj is currently a Tunnell Trust, Park Lane Group and Countess of Munster Recital Scheme artist, alongside pianist Dominic Degavino. Since 2013, she has frequently performed with guitarist James Girling, as Meraki Duo. In 2019 they were finalists in the Royal

Overseas League competition and are current International Guitar Foundation Young Artists. With a strong interest in outreach work, she's a Live Music Now artist. Competition successes include first prize in the Royal Academy of Music Flute Competition and Dutch International Flute Competition and 3rd prize in the British Flute Society Competition. She graduated with Distinction in her Masters, studying with Michael Cox at the Royal Academy of Music. In 2017, she graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music (first class honours), studying with Wissam Boustany and Laura Jellicoe. Meera enjoys a diverse performing career and has played at the Concertgebouw, Bridgewater Hall, Wigmore Hall and Kings Place.

Deronne White

Deronne White is a flautist of Jamaican descent from London, and studied with Gitte Marcusson, Simon Channing, Adam Walker and Stewart McIlwham at the Royal College of Music. At the RCM, Deronne had the opportunity to take part in masterclasses with renowned flautists such as Adam Walker and Juliette Bausor. Prior to his studies at the Royal College of Music, Deronne experienced a wide range of orchestral repertoire through being a member of several youth orchestras such as the London Schools' Symphony Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. Deronne is a member of the Chineke! Orchestra and the Brixton Chamber Orchestra, and has worked with other organisations including the Paraorchestra and the East London Music Group. Deronne has performed at venues and events such as the BBC Proms, Glastonbury, Edinburgh International Festival, The Brit Awards, Concertgebouw and The Lincoln Center. Deronne has also been a part of several musical documentaries and filming sessions which include the BBC Documentary 'Black Classical Music: A Forgotten History' with the Chineke! Orchestra, the Sky Arts Documentary 'Reinventing the Orchestra with Charles Hazlewood' with the Paraorchestra and the Apple Music Classical Commercial with Music in Vision.

Oboe

Lorraine Hart

Lorraine worked as solo cor anglais of the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra since graduating from her Master's studies in 2019. She's now based in the UK and has also been engaged by the London Symphony Orchestra, English National Opera, Chineke!, Britten Sinfonia, C/O Berlin, Music in the Round and the London Contemporary Orchestra. She has recorded a CD of Divertissements with the % Chamber Orchestra in Berlin which has been nominated for an International Classical Music

Award and featured in Presto Classical's top 100 recordings and BBC Radio 3's record of the week. Lorraine studied at the Royal Academy of Music, Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Mannheim and completed her master's studies at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover in Germany. Notably, she has studied with Svetlin Doytchinov, Lena Schuhknecht, Celia Nicklin, Kai Frömbgen, Klaus Becker and Emmanuel Abbühl. She was a Royal Philharmonic Society Enterprise Award Winner in 2021 and co-founded 'Wunderkammer Co.'; a flexible, interdisciplinary collaboration of actor musicians. She is passionate about extending the reach of classical music, improvisation, discovering new repertoire and seeking multidisciplinary collaborations

Banita Wheatley-Holmes

Banita is currently in the final year of her master's degree at the Royal Northern College of Music, under the tuition of Stephane Rancourt (Hallé), Jonathan Small (Liverpool Philharmonic) and Ruth Contractor (Scottish Ballet). She is grateful to complete this course with the help of the Giles Thomas Lyth Scholarship. Over the duration of her studies, Banita has taken part in workshops with the Hallé and Opera North. She has performed in masterclasses for Diana Doherty, Olivier Stankiewicz and DuDu Carmel. She has worked with the Piccadilly Symphony Orchestra, Manchester Film Orchestra and the Chineke! Foundation. Covering a variety of genres, she enjoys outreach work with her wind quintet. Enthusiastic about adding to the oboe repertoire, Banita composes for the oboe and cor anglais. She premiered her first composition with Nicholas Daniel at the Leicester Music Festival and the Wigmore Hall (2022)

Clarinet

Dan Bayley

Originally from Hull, Daniel studied at the Royal Northern College of Music (Manchester) and the Flemish Conservatoire in Antwerp, Belgium. Since then Daniel has enjoyed a busy and varied freelance career along with being a member of the Northern Chamber Orchestra. Daniel has played with many of the major orchestras around the UK including guest principal with the Hallé, BBC Philharmonic, Manchester Camerata and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. He has also appeared on many occasions at the BBC Proms and has been fortunate to travel worldwide with a variety of orchestras including tours to Europe, China, Japan and India. Daniel has recently taken part in a pioneering educational project staged within the heart of special schools, involving costumed and choreographed pieces from memory.

Anton Clarke-Butler

Anton Clarke-Butler is a British Clarinettist and a graduate from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire where he achieved a honours degree in music performance followed by a MA with Distinction. Anton has recently been appointed Deputy Programme Director at The Nucleo Project, a 'music for social action' programme in London. The project provides children and young people with ensemble based musical opportunities and enables them to have orchestral and instrumental lessons completely free of charge. Anton has been on UK and European Tours with artists such as Steve Hackett, Zep Boys and The Who, performing in venues such as the London Palladium, Royal Festival Hall, Bridgewater Hall and the Royal Albert Hall amongst others. Anton played at the BBC Proms 2019 with the Chineke! Orchestra and performed in many contemporary music projects, including BBC Radio 3 New Music Show and the Beijing Modern Music Festival as well as chamber projects with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Isha Crichlow

British clarinettist Isha Crichlow leads a busy and varied freelance career as an orchestral player and soloist. Over the past year, Isha has performed as a guest player with many UK orchestras, including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Welsh National Opera, Chineke! Orchestra, Multi-Story Orchestra and Aurora Orchestra. Isha also performs regularly as a soloist and chamber musician. Recent engagements include recitals in Crete with Greek pianist Dimitris Karydis, recitals at the New North London Synagogue, and concertos by Weber and Peter Maxwell Davies with the Morley Chamber Orchestra. Isha studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where she completed a Master of Performance in Orchestral Artistry, in association with the London Symphony Orchestra. While studying at the Guildhall School, Isha was selected for side-by-side orchestral opportunities with the London Mozart Players and the Australian Chamber Orchestra. After graduating with Distinction, Isha went on to receive training from the London Philharmonic Orchestra as a member of the Foyle Future Firsts development scheme. In addition to her musical career, Isha is passionate about nature and conservation and is a keen birdwatcher. She combined these interests in a birdsong-inspired solo recital as part of the 2019 Sound Unbound festival at the Barbican Centre, which included the world premiere of Ornithology by Marcus Dawe. Isha also performs regularly with Orchestra for the Earth, a dynamic ensemble working to raise awareness and combat the climate crisis through musical collaboration.

Bassoon

Linton Stephens

Chester-born Linton Stephens began playing the bassoon at the age of 16. He studied at the Royal Northern College of Music as a junior, undergraduate and postgraduate, for which he was a prestigious Ogglesby Scholar and achieved a distinction. He won a place at the renowned Hochschule für Music Franz Liszt in Weimar, under Prof. Frank Först. Linton is the Sub-Principal Bassoon with Chineke! Orchestra, with whom he has performed at the BBC Proms and at Wigmore Hall. He has recently appeared with the BBC Philharmonic, Hallé Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Clonter Opera, Opera North, European Opera Centre, Northern Chamber Orchestra and English National Ballet, among others. He is passionate about music education and equality within the industry and regularly runs workshops to coach ensembles for young musicians throughout the country. Linton currently holds a seat on the board for the Musicians Union equality committee.

Gordon Laing

Saxophone

Andy Panayi

Andy Panayi is an exceptionally gifted musician, skilled in performance, composition and arranging. He plays all the flutes and all the saxophones and currently leads his own groups, both jazz and classical. He also writes commissioned works and compositions & arrangements for his own ensembles. Andy has performed and recorded with many singers including: Shirley Bassey, Paul McCartney, Elaine Delmar, Elaine Paige, Seth MacFarlane, Salena Jones, Georgie Fame, Irene Reed, Helen Shapiro, Madeline Bell, Patty Austin and Jessye Norman. He's also worked alongside or supported Abdullah Ibrahim, Freddie Hubbard, Phil Woods, Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Centre Jazz Orchestra, Joe Lovano, Roy Hargrove, Louie Bellson Octet & Big Band, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, The Moscow City Ballet, Ronnie Scott, Scott Hamilton, Pepper Adams, Kenny Baker, Ted Heath/ Don Lusher Big Band, BBC Big Band, Bert Kaempfert Orchestra, Stan Tracey Big Band/ Septet/Octet, John Dankworth & Cleo Laine, Humphrey Lyttelton and many more.

French Horn

Pierre Buizer

Pierre Buizer received his musical education from Jacob Slagter at the Conservatory of Amsterdam, where he graduated with distinction in 2008. He is playing in a lot of chamber music ensembles with for example Radovan Vlatkovic and Natalia

Gutman as well as colleagues from different orchestras. Pierre is also very passionate about orchestral playing which led to joining horn groups as a member in Nationaltheater Mannheim, Brussels Philharmonic and since 2019 as a member of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra. The need to share not only classical music but also to share the importance of diversity in this classical music scene with the audience is where his world and Chineke! Orchestra come together.

Derryck Nasib

Derryck completed his undergraduate and postgraduate studies at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, under the tuition of Michael Murray, Stephen Stirling and Sue Dent. Whilst there, he was awarded the Ed Mills French Horn prize. Other achievements include winning the Philip Jones Brass Competition with two chamber ensembles in 2015 and 2016 respectively. Derryck has a stimulating and varied freelance career and thoroughly enjoys his frequent appearances with Chineke!. Highlights have included last year's performance at the BBC Proms and the annual Classic FM concert from 2021, both at the Royal Albert Hall. In 2021, he performed with the CBSO at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, and later that year, joined them on their European tour. Last Autumn, Derryck made his first appearance with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican. Derryck also enjoys session playing and alongside the classical repertoire, he has a wide interest in several other genres of music. A real highlight for him is performing with The Outlook Orchestra, accompanying artists such as Dizzee Rascal and also the drum and bass DJ-duo, Fabio & Grooverider, the latter of whom he will be performing with again this summer.

Nivanthi Karunaratne

Nivanthi Karunaratne is the Principal Horn of the South Asian Symphony Orchestra. She has performed at world-famous institutions including the Netherlands' Concertgebouw; the US's Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Chicago Symphony Center; Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts; India's International Centre and Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium; and the UK's Regent Hall, Cadogan Hall, and Royal Albert Hall. Recent appearances include with opera company Teatro Nuovo in Lincoln Center, Chineke! performing the Black Panther soundtrack at the Royal Albert Hall, in Alicia Keys' new music video for "If I Ain't Got You" as part of the Queen Charlotte Global Orchestra, the Prince Regent's Band in the Tudor-era Hellens Manor, the Jerusalem Baroque Orchestra in a tour of Israel, and La Petite Bande at the Concertgebouw. Nivanthi is currently pursuing a Professional

Diploma on full scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music. She completed an MMus at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, where she earned a Distinction. While at TLCDM, Nivanthi won the Historical Performance Competition (2023), the Soloists' Competition (2023), the Ed Mills French Horn Prize (2022), and twice received the Colin Blythe Bursary Fund (2022, 2023). She also won the International Horn Society's Natural Horn Competition (2022). Nivanthi's studies at TLCDM were supported by several scholarships, namely from Trinity College London, Derek Butler, and the Leverhulme Trust. Nivanthi also holds an MMus from the Yale School of Music and a BA in Neuroscience from Princeton University.

Trumpet

Aaron Akugbo

Aaron Akugbo is a Scottish trumpet player. Currently a member of the European Union Youth Orchestra, he also freelances in London. He has recently been offered a trial with the BBC Symphony Orchestra for its Principal Trumpet position, as well as coming joint third place in the Fantini International Trumpet Competition in Rome. Since coming to the Royal Academy of Music, Aaron has been Principal Trumpet of the Academy Symphony Orchestra under conductors such as Ed Gardner and Trevor Pinnock. Aaron is a member of his brass quintet, Connaught Brass, who won the Academy's Worshipful Company of Musicians Brass Ensemble Prize. Last summer, the quintet got to play as part of the Ferrandou Musique festival, performing in churches around rural central France, and will return this year for the 2019 season. Outside of RAM, Aaron is a member of the Chineke! Orchestra. In addition to playing the trumpet, Aaron is a classically trained bass-baritone, and was a choral scholar from 2017-18 at St Mary's Battersea Church.

Gabriel Dias

Gabriel Dias, a Brazilian trumpeter, has established himself as a versatile performer and dedicated music educator. He earned his degree from the Manhattan School of Music and the Juilliard School on full scholarships. Before relocating to New York and then London, he spent three seasons as a member with the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra and the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Theatre Orchestra. Gabriel has performed with distinguished orchestras and ensembles worldwide, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Aurora Orchestra, Welsh National Opera, Malaysian Symphony Orchestra, Flanders Symphony Orchestra, and the Verbier Chamber Orchestra. He has also participated in performances at prominent music festivals, such as the Verbier and Lucerne festivals

in Switzerland, and the BBC Proms in London. His playing has been featured on recordings for labels like Sony Classical, Deutsche Grammophon, and Decca Records. Gabriel's versatility extends beyond classical music; he has contributed to film and TV soundtracks and performed at high-profile fashion shows for Burberry in London and Louis Vuitton in Paris. As a soloist, chamber musician, and founder/director of Rio Brass, a London-based brass band merging pop music with Brazilian rhythms, Gabriel continually explores new artistic ventures. He demonstrates his passion for music education by working as a brass teacher in both South America and the UK.

Harry Plant

Harry, born in Eastbourne, East Sussex began his musical studies at a young age attending many of the local music service ensembles and several local brass bands. He trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama between 2016 and 2020, graduating with a first-class honours degree. Whilst being classically trained, Harry also has a vast amount of experience in pop/ folk and jazz genre as a session musician. His professional credits have already him seen perform with a range of world-famous artists including Bruno Mars, Stormzy, Gregory Porter and Jamie Cullum. Alongside live performances, he's also played for a wealth of studio and film session work at Abbey Road, Sarm West and the Rockfield Studios. Alongside music, Harry currently works as the Guildhall Student Union President, a role in which he took over in September 2020.

Trombone Chris Augustine

Christopher Augustine is currently Tenor/Bass Trombonist and Cover Conductor in Disney's Frozen. He was formerly Sub-Principal Trombone with Welsh National Opera from 2018-2021. Christopher has freelanced with many of the London orchestras playing Principal in London Symphony, Royal Philharmonic, Philharmonia and Chineke! Orchestras. He has trialled for positions in the BBC Concert Orchestra (Principal), Royal Ballet Sinfonia (Sub-Principal), BBC National Orchestra of Wales (Sub-Principal) and in London's West End has worked on Wicked, Matilda, The Lion King and Everybody's Talking About Jamie. Christopher was also a member of the Foyle's Future Firsts programme with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Christopher has a BMus from Goldsmiths College, an MMus from Trinity Laban Conservatoire and spent a Postgraduate year at the Royal Academy of Music. He is also a trombone tutor at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Chris was awarded an Associate of The Royal Academy of Music.

Harry Brown

Harry Brown was born in London and was awarded a scholarship to study for a Master of Music degree at the Royal Academy of Music, London. His musical background stems from the church and was nurtured at a very early age by his mother who was the Choir director and Church Organist. Harry has excelled in a variety of musical spheres: jazz, early music, reggae, classical, pop and chamber music as well as a composer, educator and scholar. His performance, studio and vast arranging credits include many international artists across the globe: Adele, Massive Attack, The Jazz Warriors, McCoy Tyner, Tom Jones, Barry White, Roy Ayers, Courtney Pine, Chronixx, The Skatalites, Keziah Jones, Joss Stone, Chineke!, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Plan B, John Legend, Rudimental, Jerry Dammers to name but a few. He was recently featured in the original West end musicals Get up Stand up and Ain't too proud. In recognition of his significant contribution to the music industry Harry was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in May 2010.

Bass Trombone Michaia Berlouis

London-born Michaia Berlouis is a 23 year-old musician and grew up in Northamptonshire, where his musical education was started and mostly nurtured by the Northamptonshire Music & Performing Arts Trust. During his time there he played in the Concert Band, Big Band and Brass Band. Michaia then spent his sixth form years at Chetham's School of Music before commencing studies at the Royal Academy of Music. Since 2019, Michaia has been regularly working with the Chineke! Orchestra, which is Europe's first majority black and ethnically diverse orchestra. Alongside Chineke!, Michaia has also had the pleasure of working with other orchestras and bands, such as the Halle, Philharmonia and Aurora Orchestras, Shadwell Opera, Sticky Wicket & His Swing Orchestra, Olivia Murphy Jazz Orchestra and the National Youth Jazz Orchestra. Other recent achievements include being accepted onto the Royal Opera House's Mentorship Programme 2022/23, Philharmonia Orchestra's Fellowship Programme (2021/22) and joining the Benedetti Foundation as a Creative Ambassador (2022/23). He is currently finishing his postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music, with generous support from the Royal Academy of Music, St Marylebone Educational Foundation, Countess of Munster Trust (Derek Butler Award), and the Craxton Memorial Trust.

Tuba Hanna Mbuya

Hanna Mbuya is a London-based tuba player, who enjoys a varied freelance career throughout the UK and Europe. She is currently undertaking her postgraduate studies at the Royal College of Music under Pete Smith and Owen Slade, having graduated with First Class Honors from her undergraduate studies at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, where she studied with Oren Marshall. As well as performing as a member of the Chineke! Orchestra, with whom she has had the privilege of playing in notable venues including the Royal Festival Hall and Royal Albert Hall as part of the BBC Proms, Hanna's interests also lie outside of the world of classical music - particularly as a member of Mercury Award-nominated jazz 10-piece Seed Ensemble and the Nu Civilisation Orchestra. Past collaborations also include tours with Zoe Rahman's Inner City Ensemble, Soweto Kinch's Black Peril and Jason Moran's Harlem Hellfighters project. Also an avid chamber musician, Hanna was the recipient of the Trinity Laban Philip Jones Prize in 2018 and 2019 with two of her brass ensembles and has taken part in a number of outreach tours with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's "In at the Deep End" chamber ensemble, giving school and community concerts throughout the UK.

Timpani Paul Philbert MBE

Born in London, Paul Philbert displayed his musical propensity early in life, studying at the Purcell School of Music, and further, at Trinity College of Music. He then established himself on the professional stage as the founding Principal Timpanist of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra in 1998. Paul has appeared as a guest performer with many renowned ensembles in the UK and Asia, including the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Seoul Philharmonic, the Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, Hallé and Qatar Philharmonic, to name but a few. In 2015, Paul became the founding Principal Timpanist of the Chineke! Orchestra. He was also appointed Principal Timpanist of the Orchestra of Opera North, a position he held for three years before moving to Scotland where he is now the Principal Timpanist, and a Player-Director, with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and a Timpani Tutor at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He also sits on the Board of Trustees for Sistema Scotland, and the Association of British Orchestras. His role with Chineke! continues. Paul was awarded an MBE for services to music in H.M. the Queen's Birthday Honours List on 10th October 2020.

Percussion
Sacha Johnson

Born in London, Sacha Johnson studied percussion at the Birmingham Conservatoire and then won a scholarship to study at the Guildhall School of Music. This was followed by a Fellowship at the Tanglewood Institute. As a freelance musician, he has worked with most of the UK's leading symphony orchestras and opera companies and has been a guest principal percussionist and timpani with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Welsh National Opera, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, The Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Opera North and the Northern Sinfonia. He performs regularly with the contemporary music ensemble 'Kokoro' where he has premiered many new works as well being a featured soloist. As a soloist, he has given numerous recitals on the vibraphone, (his favourite percussion instrument) and, in 2018, performed both of the Vibraphone Concertos by Ney Rosauro. Away from classical music, Sacha has worked on several West End musicals including Jesus Christ Superstar, Cats, Saturday Night Fever, We Will Rock You and the

The Lion King. In 2021 he begins work on the Walt Disney production of Beauty And The Beast. As committed to teaching as he is playing, Sacha has been teaching percussion at Marlborough College since 1998, becoming the Senior Percussion Tutor in 2007 and then Head of Percussion in 2008. He has taught at the Junior Departments of Trinity Laban, The Birmingham Conservatoire and has been the Percussion Tutor on a number of national music courses including the National Youth Orchestra's 'Inspiration' program. In 2015, Sacha was invited by Chi-chi Nwanoku OBE to be the Principal Percussionist with the Chineke! Orchestra for their debut concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Fully committed to the Chineke! mission, he has since gone on to perform extensively with the orchestra in the U.K. and abroad.

Jason Chowdhury

Jason is a Graduate Scholar of the Royal of College of Music (London). He has worked with many orchestras such as the BBC Symphony Orchestra and English National Opera. He has performed both internationally and in many of the UK's leading concert venues as a soloist and

in ensembles. Jason regularly works in London's West End - having performed on shows including Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, Hamilton, Get Up Stand Up and Disney's The Lion King. Other performance highlights include being a Drum Captain and performer for the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony. Also performing for members of the Royal Family including HRH King Charles. Jason is also passionate about music education and holds several teaching positions.

Electric Piano
Konya Kanneh-Mason



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