



nonclassical at 20: London Symphony Orchestra
October 26, 2024
Hackney Empire

Set list:

Inertia – Sasha Scott*

Dark Lights – Gabriel Prokofiev

Love – Mica Levi

Not Getting Any – Emily Abdy**

Xàtiva Street – Darren Bloom**

Breath, Contained III (Excerpt) – Tonia Ko**

The Beginning of the World – Tansy Davies

Ezir Kara – Christian Mason

Sift: Piano, Vibraphone, Other – Beatrice Dillon*†

Concerto for Drum Machine and Orchestra

- i. *Interdimensional Cable* – Laurence Osborn
- ii. *snarerush* – Max de Wardener
- iii. *808* – Beni Giles
- iv. *PRESTO* – Josephine Stephenson

Conductor

Darren Bloom

Soloists

Sasha Scott

Gabriel Prokofiev

Emily Abdy

Tonia Ko

James Larter

Josephine Stephenson

DJs

Matthew Herbert

Gabriel Prokofiev

* *world premiere*

** *world premiere of new arrangement*

† *co-commission with BBC Radio 3 and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra*

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Nonclassical and the London Symphony Orchestra join forces to celebrate the most adventurous sounds in orchestral music today. Tonight we're spotlighting thirteen visionary composers defining the here, now and future of classical music, including works by acclaimed electronic artist **Beatrice Dillon**, sonic polymath **Mica Levi**, and the ever-inventive producer/DJ **Matthew Herbert**, who spins special contemporary classical-meets-dance music sets throughout the evening.

Expect live electronics, surprising instruments in the form of bubblewrap and drum machine, and a host of world premieres in an eclectic celebration of new music by living composers.

Beatrice Dillon (PAN) – acclaimed composer, producer and sound artist – premieres her first orchestral work. Known for her widely-celebrated album *Workaround* (Album of the Year by The Wire Magazine 2020), Dillon translates her distinct vocabulary of synthetic sound and generative systems into the acoustic realm of the orchestra.

Further music on the night ventures into far sonic horizons, spanning the spectrum of diverse voices genre-bending and redefining both electronic and classical worlds: Mica Levi's iconic *Love* (from the soundtrack for Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin*) envelops listeners in a bear hug of oozy synths and sustained notes; **Sasha Scott's** *Inertia* and **Gabriel Prokofiev's** *Dark Lights* converge intense, exhilarating live electronics with orchestral texture; **Tonia Ko's** *Breath, Contained III* explores the delicate, nuanced sonics of bubble wrap; and **Tansy Davies' The Beginning of the World** spins a 16th-century dance tune into a bold new contemporary work.

The night builds up to the first ever *Concerto for Drum Machine and Orchestra*, celebrating the iconic Roland 808 drum machine – heard on tracks by artists including Run-DMC, Afrika Bambaataa and Talking Heads – with movements by **Josephine Stephenson**, **Laurence Osborn**, **Max de Wardener** and **Beni Giles**. Revered producer/DJ Matthew Herbert ends the night with one of his signature eclectic DJ sets.

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Programme Notes

All programme notes courtesy of the composers, bar Mica Levi's note.

***Inertia* – Sasha Scott**

Inertia is one of four tracks on my EP *Angel*, which will be released on 22nd November 2024. The EP is inspired by the hallucinations and changes in perception that happen during disordered sleep, such as sleep paralysis. This particular track was inspired by the concept of 'inertia' in physics, where something stays still unless an outside force acts on it. It's kind of like that moment when you're about to fall asleep, and suddenly you dream of falling, and you wake up with your heart racing.

***Dark Lights* – Gabriel Prokofiev**

Dark Lights is one in a series of works from Gabriel Prokofiev's journey in combining the two disciplines of Electronic Dance Music and Classical Orchestral music. Through much of his career Gabriel has had parallel careers in both genres, and he has often incorporated elements of electronic dance in his classical compositions. *Dark Lights* combines a deep 4-to-the-floor electronic bass drum, reversed cymbals, and 8-bit shakers; with violin crescendos, wood-wind sighs, and a syncopated bass-line in the cellos & double basses. A chromatic classical piano melody dances on top. The piece ends with a loop that the conductor is free to repeat ad lib, shaping the dynamics as they wish.

***Love* – Mica Levi**

Woozy electronics engulf the listener in *Love*, one of the most iconic tracks from composer Mica Levi. Originally written for Jonathan Glazer's film *Under the Skin*, this piece balances eerie menace with intoxicating pitch slides.

***Not Getting Any* – Emily Abdy**

An original idea in 2020 and arranged to be made new in 2024, this piece was written out of frustration in both instances. Little has changed in that time between except myself. I am sure many like me and beyond would say the same. For that reason and many more, it would feel immoral not to speak on the subject when at no other time would I likely be gifted a captive audience, an ensemble of proficient artistic communicators and a microphone. I resist the urge to thank you for your patience.

***Xàtiva Street* – Darren Bloom**

In February 2012 students and schoolchildren in Valencia, Spain, took to the streets to protest brutal austerity cuts to schools imposed by a regional government rife with corruption scandals. These students, who had, in some cases, been wearing blankets in their classrooms because the schools couldn't afford heating, took to Xàtiva Street to voice their discontent only to be brutally attacked by the police with batons and rubber bullets. Originally for brass and percussion, this 'protest fanfare' was premiered in the Palau de la Musica, Valencia in front of an audience that included many supporters of the police and austerity measures. The version you hear tonight is a complete reimagining of the piece.

***Breath, Contained III (Excerpt)* – Tonia Ko**

Breath, Contained III is a concerto scored for amplified bubble wrap soloist with chamber orchestra. It features imaginative orchestrations of a unique solo instrument, consisting of various sizes and shapes of air packaging. Tonia Ko has been developing the friction-based performance techniques for the material since 2013, and this practice runs in parallel to her composition work for more traditional mediums. An inexplicable reluctance to pop the



bubbles reflects emotional qualities of the work: pent-up energy, unreleased emotions... breath, contained. All packaging material used in this piece was scavenged or donated by the community.

***The Beginning of the World* – Tansy Davies**

The Beginning of the World is a variation on the well-known *Sellinger's Round* theme, dated 1590 and one of the earliest known notated melodies. I wanted to zoom back in time, beyond the 16th century, way back to an imaginary pre-historic landscape. The watery, layered texture of the opening aims to capture the mood of a moment on earth as the very first life forms began to emerge. Waves of tiny musical cells quiver into life with a neutral kind of freshness, suspended motion, not aware of time; only of the present moment. Human drama is hinted at, and later explodes in a passionate outburst, but the discovery of time; past, present and future – and perhaps all of human history – dissolves back again into the watery vision of the opening. It was commissioned by BBC Radio 3 for the 2013 BBC Proms.

***Ezir Kara* – Christian Mason**

Ezir Kara is one of the four movements of my *Tuvan Songbook*. It was the practice of throat singing – following workshops with Michael Ormiston – that first attracted me to Tuvan music. The four traditional Tuvan songs – all in some way about horses – that I have transcribed and re-composed and constitute the songbook, are all known to me from the Ay-Kherel CD 'The Music of Tuva – Throat Singing and Instruments from Central Asia' (2004, Arc Music). According to the notes from that CD, *Ezir Kara* ('Black Eagle') is "the name of a horse, who became a legend through his remarkable strength and speed." In this piece there are galloping rhythms aplenty, and though I am no horse rider I tried to keep the horses galloping in my imagination while composing these pieces.

***Sift: Piano, Vibraphone, Other* – Beatrice Dillon**

I wanted the piece to feel uncluttered and spacious, as though expanding laterally. My approach was intuitive, generating different patterns and ways to combine and proportion them. I then selected and reduced those patterns for the range of each instrument, listening for results I liked.

Concerto for Drum Machine and Orchestra

***Interdimensional Cable* – Laurence Osborn**

I began writing *Interdimensional Cable* by taking spectral analyses of the Roland TR-808 slowed down 1000x. This informs all of the harmony of the piece. During the compositional process, I wrote five very different openings to this piece, with the intention of choosing between them. Then I decided that these five openings would form the piece in its entirety, and that the piece's form would be a process of juxtaposing, rewinding and fast forwarding them in a restless sort of way. This 'channel-hopping' between radically different bits of material reminded me of the 'Interdimensional Cable' episodes of Netflix's animated sci-fi series *Rick and Morty*, in which the characters sit in front of the T.V., impatiently switching between cable channels from parallel universes.

***snarerush* – Max de Wardener**

snarerush pays tribute to the impossibly fast drum rolls of early nineties electronic dance music, and how producers could create tension in such a fun and blatant way. To add to



this feeling, I constantly modulated the speed of the music in order to subvert the usual rigid feeling of a single unwavering tempo, synonymous with drum machines. Hopefully this creates a sense of unsettling playfulness.

808 - Beni Giles

In this slow movement, the 808 takes on an unconventional role. Rather than driving a steady rhythm, the drum machine's sounds are used in a more broken, atomised fashion, sometimes clustering into fragmented beats. The 808 is in constant dialogue with the orchestral percussion, creating moments of tension and space within the texture. The result is at times febrile, at times placid. The interaction between the electronic and acoustic elements unfolds gradually, offering a reflective counterpoint to the concerto's more dynamic sections.

PRESTO - Josephine Stephenson

PRESTO is the final movement from the collaborative Concerto for Drum Machine and Orchestra. Running at 152bpm, the piece was composed with and for the TR-08's step sequencer, using it to create looping patterns that, with the gradual addition of new elements, shift our sense of the beat over time. These patterns in turn influenced the orchestral material which was built and evolves around them, in dialogue. In performance, the drum machine soloist has to control everything beyond the initial programming of the patterns on the spot, making for an exhilarating live experience.



About the organisations

nonclassical

nonclassical is a charity presenting the best new classical, experimental and electronic music – a cutting-edge music promoter, record label and events producer. Crossing genre and defying convention, we develop, produce and promote innovative music, supporting emerging artists and bringing new music to new audiences.

Founded in 2004 by composer Gabriel Prokofiev, nonclassical began as a clubnight focused on presenting new music in non-traditional performance spaces. We have since presented events across the UK and worldwide, and our record label is home to artists including Tansy Davies, Aïsha Orazbayeva, Gabriel Prokofiev, Langham Research Centre, Alex Paxton and many more, as we platform and support the development of artists at all stages of their careers.

London Symphony Orchestra

The London Symphony Orchestra believes that extraordinary music should be available to everyone, everywhere – from orchestral fans in the concert hall to first-time listeners all over the world. The LSO was established in 1904 as one of the first orchestras shaped by its musicians. Since then, generations of remarkable talents have built the LSO's reputation for quality, ambition and a commitment to sharing the joy of music with everyone. The LSO performs some 70 concerts every year as Resident Orchestra at the Barbican, with its family of artists: Chief Conductor Sir Antonio Pappano, Conductor Emeritus Sir Simon Rattle, Principal Guest Conductors Gianandrea Noseda and François-Xavier Roth, Conductor Laureate Michael Tilson Thomas, and Associate Artists Barbara Hannigan and André J Thomas. The LSO has major artistic residencies in Paris, Tokyo and at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, and a growing presence across Australasia.

Through LSO Discovery, the LSO's learning and community programme, 60,000 people each year experience the transformative power of music. The Orchestra's musicians are at the heart of this unique programme, leading workshops, mentoring bright young talent, and visiting schools, hospitals and community spaces. The home of much of this work is LSO St Luke's, the LSO's venue on Old Street. In 2025, following a programme of works, the LSO will open up the venue's facilities to more people than ever before, with new state-of-the-art recording facilities and dedicated spaces for LSO Discovery.

The LSO's record label LSO Live is a leader among orchestra-owned labels, bringing to life the excitement of a live performance in a catalogue of over 200 acclaimed recordings, and reaching millions through streaming services and online broadcasts. The LSO has been prolific in the studio since the infancy of orchestral recording, and has made more recordings than any other orchestra – over 2,500 projects to date – across film, video games and bespoke audio collaborations.

Through inspiring music, learning programmes and digital innovations, the LSO's reach extends far beyond the concert hall. And thanks to the generous support of The City of London Corporation, Arts Council England, corporate supporters, trusts and foundations, and individual donors, the LSO is able to continue sharing extraordinary music with as many people as possible, across London, and the world.

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nonclassical would also like to extend special thanks to:

The LSO team

Hackney Empire

All artists and composers involved in tonight's concert

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