



Royal College of Music presents Holst's masterpiece *The Planets* in debut performance at BBC Proms and Helsinki Festival

The Royal College of Music (RCM) Symphony Orchestra bring Gustav Holst's dazzling depiction of a journey through space to the BBC Proms on 25 August and Helsinki Festival's closing concert on 1 September, in collaboration with the Sibelius Academy.

Marking the 150th anniversary of Gustav Holst's birth, the joined forces of the Royal College of Music and Sibelius Academy Symphony Orchestras guide audiences through one of his best-loved works, *The Planets*, with the senior College and RCM Junior Department Chamber Choirs in the spectacular surroundings of the Royal Albert Hall on 25 August 2024 and the Helsinki Music Centre on 1 September 2024.

One of the 20th century's best-loved composers, Holst studied composition at the Royal College of Music and in 1919 joined the teaching staff at his alma mater working alongside Adrian Boult who conducted the first private performance of *The Planets*. The manuscripts for the two-piano versions of five of *The Planets*' movements are kept in the RCM Library alongside many other manuscripts by the composer.

Under the baton of Sakari Oramo, a seasoned BBC Proms figure and regular guest conductor at the College, the programme's first half explores the sounds of Finland. The orchestra give the second ever Proms performance of Sibelius's lesser-known tone poem *The Wood Nymph*, preceded by the world premiere of *Laulut Maaseudulta* ('Songs from the Countryside') by Finnish-American composer and Royal College of Music alumna Lara Poe.

Laulut Maaseudulta features acclaimed Finnish soprano Anu Korsi and channels haunting Nordic cow-calling traditions. Lara Poe describes how she approached the piece: 'I'd heard Anu Korsi performing 'kulning' (cow-calling) in previous concerts and was always so inspired by her extraordinary voice. When writing *Laulut Maaseudulta* I remembered this experience and began thinking about my grandmother's upbringing on a farm in Espoo, Finland. I've also woven other Finnish folk material into the piece.'

Stephen Johns, Royal College of Music Artistic Director, commented: 'We are delighted to be collaborating for the first time with the Sibelius Academy, and welcoming Sakari Oramo back to the Royal College of Music. This celebration of the music from Finland and the UK is a wonderful opportunity for our musicians to work together, performing in two of the greatest summer music festivals, the BBC Proms and the Helsinki Festival.'

The BBC Proms performance will be televised on BBC Four and broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.

Booking is open for the Helsinki Festival and booking for the BBC Proms opens on 18 May.

For all the latest updates, follow the RCM on social media on [X](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#) and [YouTube](#).

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About the Royal College of Music

Founded in 1882, the Royal College of Music (RCM) is a world leading music conservatoire with a prestigious history and contemporary outlook. More than 900 undergraduate and postgraduate students come from over 50 countries and are taught in a dynamic environment, leaving the RCM to become the outstanding performers, conductors, and composers of the future. In 2024 the Royal College of Music was ranked the Global No. 1 institution for Performing Arts for the third year running and earned the inaugural top spot for Music in the QS World University Rankings by Subject.

The Royal College of Music has trained some of the most important figures in British and international music including composers and performers such as Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten, Michael Tippett, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Leopold Stokowski, Sir Hubert Parry, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Neville Marriner, Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Thomas Allen, Dame Sarah Connolly, Tarik O'Regan, Lord Lloyd Webber, Sir James Galway, Anna Meredith MBE, Louise Alder and Mark-Anthony Turnage.

Regular visitors to the RCM include Sir Thomas Allen, Sir Antonio Pappano, Alina Ibragimova and Lang Lang. Our recent honorary doctorates include Sir Antonio Pappano, Jonas Kaufmann, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Sir Roger Norrington, Sir Bryn Terfel, Steve Reich and Maxim Vengerov (Polonsky Visiting Professor of Violin).

About the Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki

Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki is one of the largest music academies in Europe. The academy was established in 1882 and bears the name of the Finnish master composer Jean Sibelius. Our mission is to foster and renew musical culture through teaching, research, and arts. We train artists, teachers and other music professionals in an inspiring and internationally diverse environment with state-of-the-art facilities. In 2024, Sibelius Academy placed 12th in the QS World University Rankings in the field of music.