

**80th Birthday  
Season 2025/26**

**Rafael Payare conducts  
Symphonie fantastique  
Thursday 27 November 2025  
Royal Festival Hall**

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## In a nutshell...

This concert is full of vivid musical storytelling, led by conductor Rafael Payare, whose energy and charisma bring thrilling colour to every performance.

We open with Berlioz's *Roman Carnival Overture*, a burst of celebration and orchestral sparkle. Listen for bright brass fanfares, lively rhythms and a gorgeous solo for the cor anglais.

Next comes the London premiere of a trumpet concerto called *Altar de Bronce*, written especially for soloist Pacho Flores by our Composer in Residence, Gabriela Ortiz.

You will hear the trumpet take on many voices – singing, dancing and soaring above the orchestra – inspired by the rhythmic drive of Mexican popular music.

After the interval, Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* invites you into a dream world. Each movement paints a scene, from a glittering ballroom to a stormy night in the countryside. Listen for the recurring melody that represents the composer's beloved, returning again and again as his imagination spirals into an opium-fuelled nightmare. The final movement, with tolling bells and eerie effects, is one of the most dramatic endings in all orchestral music, representing his own execution.

# Welcome to this evening's concert

Philharmonia **80**

## Rafael Payare conducts *Symphonie fantastique*

Thursday 27 November 2025, 7.30pm  
Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Rafael Payare – conductor  
Pacho Flores – trumpet

BERLIOZ *Roman Carnival Overture*  
(8 mins)

ORTIZ Trumpet Concerto, 'Altar de Bronce' (London premiere, Philharmonia commission)  
(24 mins)

Interval (20 mins)

BERLIOZ *Symphonie fantastique*  
(49 mins)

This performance finishes at approximately 9.30pm

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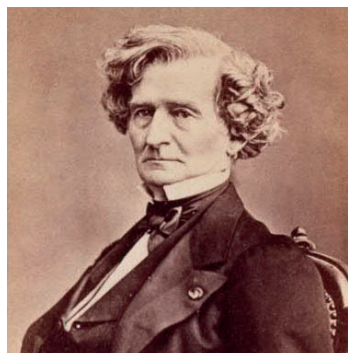
## Philharmonia Social

Philharmonia Social is our new initiative to help everyone feel welcome at our concerts.

Our staff, players and volunteers will be Level 2 next to the singing lift before and after the concert.

6.30pm: a short introduction to the orchestra and this evening's performance

6.45pm: your chance to join the conversation, ask questions and connect with your fellow audience members.



Hector Berlioz © Public Domain

## Hector Berlioz (1803 – 1869)

**Roman Carnival Overture, Op. 9**  
(1901) (8 mins)

Berlioz was the Romantic artist par excellence. Much given to Werther-like communion with Nature and meditations on suicide, he spent his early student years among the morbid horrors of medical school: 'dirty hospital orderlies, dreadful dissecting-room attendants, hideous corpses, the screams of patients, the groans and rattling breath of the dying'. He was clearly not cut out to be a doctor. Fortunately, his stubborn devotion to music overcame his parents' opposition and, after winning a place at the Paris Conservatoire, falling in love with Harriet Smithson and exorcising his passion in the *Symphonie fantastique*, he won the Prix de Rome in 1830 at the age of 26.

This was a surprise: the prize – a state-funded stay in Italy – was often awarded to mediocre composers, and many greats failed to win it or succeeded only after multiple attempts (this was Berlioz's fourth try).

In Italy, encounters with pirates, pickpockets, pilgrims and the sights and sounds of the South had a profound effect on his music. One result was the opera *Benvenuto Cellini*, a flop at its 1838 Paris Opéra premiere. Only the overture was liked, and five years later Berlioz reused some of the music in *Le carnaval romain* 'The Roman Carnival', which was a hit at its 1844 Paris première and quickly gained popularity, especially in Austria. In his memoirs, Berlioz recounts a disastrous Viennese performance on two pianos and a physharmonika, prompting him to shout: 'It's not the Carnival, it's Good Friday that you're playing!' A later orchestral performance in Vienna was a triumph: 'exploded like a mass of fireworks'.

Most of the music in *The Roman Carnival* comes from Act II of the opera. The Allegro's main themes were originally choral, while the cor anglais solo began as Cellini and Teresa's love duet in Act I. This theme recurs throughout, finally reappearing as a quasi-fugue before being swept away in a riotous burst of gaiety.

© Wendy Thompson



Gabriela Ortiz © Mera Arteaga

## Gabriela Ortiz (b. 1964)

**Trumpet Concerto, 'Altar de bronce'**  
London premiere, Philharmonia  
commission  
(2025) (24 mins)

By the time Gabriela Ortiz completed her *Altar de cuerda* (2022) for violin and orchestra, she was already considering creating a counterpart for trumpet. As it happened, the versatile Venezuelan trumpet player Pacho Flores informed her that he had a consortium of five orchestras ready and willing to commission a new musical altar from the composer: Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería, New World Symphony, and San Diego Symphony Orchestra.

When asked about the thematic, expressive, or spiritual relationship between the new work and her other altars, the composer explained that *Altar de bronce* is rather close to her *Concierto voltaje* (2013) for timpani and orchestra. *Altar de bronce* had a similar process: first the title, then research on the process of alloying copper and tin into bronze, and then the actual writing of the score. The idea that metal can exist in a solid or liquid state became a central metaphor, especially in the first part of the trumpet concerto.

The work opens with a fanfare whose essence comes from an earlier Ortiz trumpet solo work, *Tin-Tan-Fanfarria y Mambo* (2021). The core of the sonic materials of *Altar de bronce* arise from that initial fanfare; Ortiz imagined the fanfare music gradually permeating the entire orchestra (and the solo trumpet) like molten metal, granulating and diffusing through the orchestra.

The solo trumpet is accompanied by a medium-sized orchestra with a rich percussion section, which she uses for a powerful rhythmic impulse and instrumental color. The central section has a very accentuated rhythm that refers to Igor Stravinsky, while the movement of the final section features a more clearly Latin spirit, at Pacho Flores's request.

*Altar de bronce* is a single movement work, but in its development Ortiz clearly marks a series of changes of tempo and expression; specifically, the score contains this indication: Part II – Copper: reddish, metallic and shiny color. Further on, the score indicates: A ritmo di cumbia, and A ritmo di mambo – Sempre brillante al fine.

Since this is a concerto tailor-made for Pacho Flores, there is a passage that the performer can play as written or improvise. This is very much in keeping with Pacho's temperament and skill. The same goes for the cadenza; it can be played as written, or it can be improvised. Although the basic solo instrument is the trumpet in C, the soloist uses several trumpets throughout the work. Towards the end of *Altar de bronce*, Gabriela Ortiz makes a mambo reference to her symphonic work *Antrópolis* (2019), dedicated to the city of nightclubs, Mexico City.

The world premiere of *Altar de bronce* took place on April 13, 2023, at the Auditorio de Ferrol, in La Coruña, with Manuel Hernández-Silva conducting the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia and Pacho Flores as soloist. The UK premiere with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra took place on July 8, 2023, conducted by Domingo Hindoyan. The Mexican premiere took place on August 19, 2023, with Carlos Miguel Prieto conducting the Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería. These premieres represent the birth of Gabriela Ortiz's eighth musical altar.

*Altar de bronce* is the most recent in this series, but most likely will not be the last.

© Juan Arturo Brennan

*Interval (20 mins)*

## Hector Berlioz (1835 – 1921)

**Symphonie fantastique Op. 14**  
(1830) (49 mins)

- I. Rêveries, Passions (Reveries, passions):**  
**Largo – Allegro agitato**
- II. Un bal (A ball):**  
**Valse allegro non troppo**
- III. Scène aux champs (Scene in the fields):** **Adagio**
- IV. Marche au supplice (March to the Scaffold):** **Allegretto non troppo**
- V. Songe d'un nuit du Sabbat (Dream of the Night of the Sabbath):** **Larghetto – Allegro – Ronde du Sabbat** **moderato**

This symphony – one of the most significant works of art of the early 19th century – was written in 1830, just three years after the death of Beethoven. Yet it seems to inhabit a different world, that of pure Romanticism. It was directly inspired by Berlioz's then unrequited passion for an Irish actress, Harriet Smithson, whom the impressionable young composer first saw on 11 September 1827, playing Ophelia to Charles Kemble's Hamlet at the Odéon Theatre in Paris. The impact

of Shakespeare's verse and Harriet's dramatic beauty was devastating.

Berlioz pursued Harriet Smithson with dogged fanaticism, trying to arrange an introduction. They eventually met on her return to Paris in 1832 and, after a stormy courtship, were married in October 1833. As often happens, the real person failed to live up to the idealized and adored image of the 'distant beloved', and the marriage was only briefly happy. But in 1830, the sheer strength of Berlioz's desperate passion gave rise to this extraordinary symphony, whose form owes much to the symphonies of Beethoven, which Berlioz first heard in March 1828. "Beethoven opened before me a new world of music, as Shakespeare had revealed a new universe of poetry", he wrote. And in particular, the five-movement form of the Sixth Symphony, with its 'programmatic' titles, must have influenced the corresponding structure of *Symphonie fantastique*.

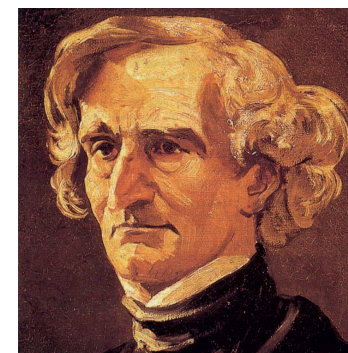
The basic premise of the work is as follows: "A young musician of extraordinary sensitivity and abundant imagination, in the depths of despair over a hopeless love, poisons himself with opium. The drug, too feeble to kill him, plunges him into a heavy sleep, accompanied by weird visions, during which his sensations, emotions and memories are transformed in his affected mind into musical images and ideas. The woman he loves becomes for him a

melody, like an idée fixe which he finds and hears everywhere."

Not surprisingly, reaction to *Symphonie fantastique* was mixed. Berlioz stated that three of the movements – the Waltz, March to the Scaffold (which was actually recycled from the unperformed opera *Les francs-juges*) and the Witches' Sabbath "created a sensation", with the March "taking the audience by storm". Schumann thought it was a masterpiece, and wrote a long essay defending the symphony against its critics.

Despite Schumann's perceptive championship, other contemporaries were baffled and outraged by the *Symphonie fantastique*'s innovations. "What a good thing it isn't music," sniffed Rossini. The following year Berlioz wrote a sequel, a lyrical monodrama called *The Return to Life*, which went the way of many such follow-ups before and since, disappearing into almost total obscurity.

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Hector Berlioz © Public Domain



## Rafael Payare – conductor



Rafael Payare © Henry Fair

With innate musicianship, charismatic energy, and a gift for communication, conductor Rafael Payare brings “considerable grace and considerable swagger” (*Los Angeles Times*). The 2025–26 season marks his fourth as Music Director of Canada’s Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (OSM) and seventh with California’s San Diego Symphony (SDS). He is also Principal Conductor of Virginia’s Castleton Festival and Conductor Laureate of Northern Ireland’s Ulster Orchestra, where he was Music Director from 2014 to 2019.

This season, Payare and SDS continue their Shostakovich and Mahler symphony cycles, performing Shostakovich’s Eighth and Mahler’s Seventh. Other highlights include Bruckner’s Fourth, Sibelius’s Violin Concerto with Augustin Hadelich, Beethoven’s First, Mendelssohn’s Third, and a Brahms festival featuring the German Requiem, all four symphonies, and the Violin Concerto with Leonidas Kavakos. Gabriela Ortiz’s new cello

concerto *Dzonot*, dedicated to Alisa Weilerstein, also premieres. At OSM, Payare opens with Berlioz’s *Damnation of Faust* and leads Mahler’s Fourth and Ninth, Beethoven with Emanuel Ax, Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro*, Tchaikovsky with Bruce Liu, and Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*. He debuts with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and appears with the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras, Pittsburgh Symphony, London’s Philharmonia, and NHK Symphony.

In 2024–25, Payare and SDS inaugurated San Diego’s renovated Jacobs Music Center with Schoenberg’s *Gurre-Lieder*, marking the composer’s 150th anniversary and releasing an all-Schoenberg album on Pentatone. Previous recordings include Strauss’s *Ein Heldenleben* and Mahler’s *Rückert-Lieder* (2024) and Mahler’s Fifth (2023), named Editor’s Choice by Gramophone and BBC Music Magazine.

Born in Barcelona, Venezuela, Payare began horn at 14 in El Sistema, later serving as Principal Horn of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra. Mentored by José Antonio Abreu, Lorin Maazel, and Krzysztof Penderecki, he now inspires young musicians worldwide through El Sistema and projects with major youth orchestras. Payare lives in San Diego and Montreal with his wife, cellist Alisa Weilerstein, and their two children.

## Pacho Flores – trumpet



Pacho Flores © Juan Martínez

Pacho Flores was awarded First Prize in the “Maurice André” International Contest, the most renowned trumpet Contest in the world, as well as First Prize in the “Philip Jones” International Contest and First Prize in the “Città di Porcia” International contest. Trained in the marvelous Orchestra System for Youth and Children in Venezuela, he received top recognition for his performances, recitals, and recordings as a soloist.

Capable of managing classical or popular styles indistinctively, Flores adds to his captivating interpretations a great deal of energy tinged with the most beautiful instrumental colors. Acting as soloist, he has performed with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Kiev, Camerata from St. Petersburg, Orchestral Ensemble from Paris, Orchestre de la Garde Républicaine, NHK Orchestra from Japan, Symphony Orchestra of Tokyo, Philharmonic Orchestra of Osaka, Simón Bolívar

Symphony Orchestra from Venezuela, Symphony Orchestra of Dusseldorf, and the Arctic Philharmonic Orchestra amongst many others. He has also given recitals in concert halls such as the Carnegie Hall in New York, Pleyel Hall in Paris, and the Opera City in Tokyo. Serving as one of the founding members of the Simón Bolívar Brass Quintet, he has taken part in numerous tours around Europe, South America, United States, and Japan.

Experienced orchestral musician, Flores has held the leading Trumpet position in the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, Saito Kinen Orchestra from Japan, and the Symphony Orchestra of Miami, under the musical direction of Maestros like Claudio Abbado, Sir Simon Rattle, Seiji Ozawa, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Rafael Frübeck of Burgos, Eduardo Marturet, and Gustavo Dudamel including many others.

Founding Director of the Latin-American Trumpet Academy in Venezuela, he fosters a promising generation of young talents. Flores is extremely keen on promoting Contemporary Music and does so providing important contributions by means of the performance and interpretation of his instrument. His repertoire includes commissions and premieres of works by composers such as Roger Boutry, Efraín Oscher, Giancarlo Castro, Santiago Báez, Juan Carlos Nuñez, and Sergio Bernal.

Recently he has carried out an important concert tour across Norway and Austria with the Arctic Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Maestro and composer Christian Lindberg, interpreting his concert *Akbank Bunka*, a piece for Trumpet and Orchestra, making his debut at the Fiestpielhaus of Salzburg, and at the Musikverein of Vienna. His first album *La Trompeta venezolana* was released by the record label Guataca Producciones.

Artist from the Stomvi family, he plays instruments that have been exclusively manufactured for him by this renowned firm, and is actively involved in the

developments and innovations of his instruments. Pachó Flores is a Deutsche Grammophon exclusive artist with already three recordings, *Cantar* with Konzerthaus Orchester Berlin and Christian Vásquez; *Entropía*, Gold Medal of the Global Music Awards; *Fractales* with Arctic Philharmonic and Christian Lindberg; the double CD-DVD *Cantos y Revueltas* with Real Filharmonía de Galicia and Manuel Hernández-Silva; and *Estirpe* with Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería y Carlos Miguel Prieto, nominated and awarded at the Latin Grammys.

Founded in 1945, the Philharmonia Orchestra Celebrates its 80th birthday in the 2025/26 season.

Conductor Santtu-Matias Rouvali took up the baton as Principal Conductor in 2021, and Marin Alsop joined him as Principal Guest Conductor in 2023.

They follow in illustrious footsteps: Herbert von Karajan, Otto Klemperer, Riccardo Muti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Christoph von Dohnányi, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Esa-Pekka Salonen are some of the key conductors who have shaped the Philharmonia's reputation as one of the world's great orchestras.

The Philharmonia has premiered music by composers including Richard Strauss, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and Errollyn Wallen and performs with many of the world's most admired soloists. Víkingur Ólafsson is this season's Featured Artist, and Gabriela Ortiz is Featured Composer.

Resident at the Southbank Centre since 1995, the Philharmonia also holds residencies in Basingstoke, Bedford, Canterbury and Leicester, and tours extensively worldwide. A major US tour in October culminated in two concerts at Carnegie Hall.

The Philharmonia's 80-year recording history includes many benchmark LP's and more than 150 film and videogame soundtracks. The Orchestra's recording of Beethoven's Symphony No.5 is travelling through interstellar space on board the Voyager spacecraft, and immersive installations and virtual reality experiences introduce orchestral music to new audiences.

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Santtu-Matias Rouvali and the Philharmonia Orchestra

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