



PLAY!
FEST
2026

EVENT PROGRAMME

DANZÓN WITH ROYAL HOLLOWAY FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

Sunday, 7 June 2026, 7.30pm

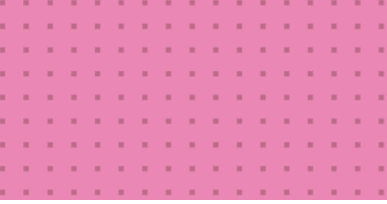
Windsor Building Auditorium

There will be a short rest break during this event.

Estimated event finish time: 9.45pm

Please no flash photography or visual/audio recording throughout the event.

For news about our PLAY! events, please visit royalholloway.ac.uk/events



EVENT OVERVIEW

We are excited to welcome back our Festival Orchestra to launch PLAY! 2026 for a concert that promises to be one of the most vibrant and thrilling events of our entire calendar.

Led by the dynamic conductor Rebecca Miller, our PLAY! Festival Orchestra takes the stage for a programme bursting with orchestral colour and cross-cultural fire. The evening whirls from the sultry, obsessive build of Ravel's Boléro to the irresistible syncopations of Márquez's Danzón No. 2, then dances through Rimsky-Korsakov's dazzling Capriccio espagnol before landing in the wild, playful brilliance of de Falla's El sombrero de tres picos ('The Three-Cornered Hat').

EVENT PROGRAMME

Maurice Ravel (1875 - 1937): *Boléro*

Conducted by Owen Knott (Assistant Conductor)

Boléro grew out of an abortive project to orchestrate piano pieces from Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz's *Iberia* to create a ballet, *Fandango*, for dancer Ida Rubinstein. Another composer had already secured the rights to orchestrate the Albéniz works, and Ravel didn't have time to compose something new. During his summer holiday in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Ravel hit on the ingeniously simple idea of *Boléro*. He created a single theme, introduced by the flute over a simple rhythmic pattern, and repeated it over and over, in different - and brilliant - instrumental combinations, gradually increasing the dynamic level from pianissimo to fortissimo over the work's 15-minute span.

With the task of composition drastically minimized, Ravel completed the work in time for the ballet's November 1928 premiere at the Paris Opera, featuring Rubinstein in the main role of a Spanish dancer. Spain was not the only inspiration; Ravel hinted to his pupil and biographer Alexis Roland-Manuel that the relentless rhythm was inspired by the factory, putting the score into the context of other industrial compositions of the period, including Prokofiev's *The Steel Step* (which Ravel had seen in Paris in 1927) and Arthur Honegger's locomotive-inspired *Pacific 231* (which premiered at the opera in 1924). Ravel expressed his dissatisfaction with the "picturesque" Rubinstein production - which featured her dancing on a table in a bar - to his brother Édouard, who oversaw a factory-inspired production, also staged at the Paris Opera, in 1941, four years after Ravel's death.

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Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844 - 1908): *Capriccio espagnole*

Considering the great interest in Spanish music demonstrated by the father of Russian art music, Mikhail Glinka (Glinka traveled extensively in

Spain, collected folk materials, and composed pieces based on them), it is not surprising that a Glinka disciple such as Rimsky-Korsakov would look for similar geographic sources of inspiration. So it is that the Russian Rimsky-Korsakov conceived a fantasy on Spanish themes; he originally intended it to be for violin and orchestra. As it developed, however, the *Capriccio espagnol* came to be not only a virtuoso work for violin, but also a work that could rightly be subtitled “Fantasy for violin, clarinet, oboe, flute, horn, trumpet (etc., etc.).” Which is to say that while the composition’s accent is Spanish, its emphasis is on solo instrumental virtuosity as well as on the orchestral effulgence that is so typical of Rimsky-Korsakov.

The composer himself commented on the dazzling merits of the piece, saying, “It is intended as a brilliant composition for the orchestra. The change of timbres, the felicitous choice of melodic designs and figuration patterns, exactly suiting each kind of instrument, brief virtuoso cadenzas for solo instruments, etc., constitute here the very essence of the composition and not its garb or orchestration. The Spanish themes of dance character furnished me with rich material for putting in use multiform orchestral effects. All in all, the capriccio is undoubtedly a purely external piece, but vividly brilliant for all that.”

The piece is in five sections, played without pause.

1. *Alborada*. This “morning song” begins with eye-opening, full orchestral thrust, out of which emerge clarinet and violin solos, the latter ending the section quietly.
2. *Variations*. A simple Spanish folk melody is given by horns. Five variations - really just elaborations on the theme - exploit various solo voices, the last ending with languorous flute chromatics.
3. *Alborada*. The first section returns; here, violin and clarinet reverse their first-movement solo passages.
4. *Scene and Gypsy Song*. A side drum initiates a fanfare for horns and trumpets alone; solo trumpet blazes out the theme. Next, solo violin takes it up; then flute and clarinet, with percussion and strings accumulating. A flute plays a cadenza over a timpani roll, then clarinet over cymbals, after which there is a harp and triangle duet. Finally, the strings interject a ferocious idea; this is the gypsy song, which then alternates with the opening fanfare motif in orchestral splendor.

5. Asturian Fandango. Trombones present the first part of the theme, winds the second. After varying timbral treatment, the Alborada returns to bring the capriccio to a fiery close.

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Manuel de Falla (1876 - 1946): Two dances from *El sombrero de tres picos*

1. The Neighbor's Dance / Vecinos / Voisins
2. Miller's Dance / Molinari / Meunier

During World War I, neutral Spain received an invigorating influx of foreign artists looking for alternative markets to those along the usual Paris-Berlin-Vienna routes. Prominent among those artists was the impresario Serge Diaghilev and his Ballets Russes, which became a favorite of King Alfonso XIII. Diaghilev discussed several potential projects with Spanish composer Manuel de Falla, settling on an adaptation of the 19th-century writer Pedro Antonio de Alarcón's comic novella *El sombrero de tres picos* (The Three-Cornered Hat). Falla brought this to the stage first as the pantomime *El corregidor y la molinera*, based on two scenes adapted by his usual collaborators, the husband-and-wife team of Gregorio Martínez Sierra and María Lejárraga.

Alarcón's novella contains a confusing amount of incident, but the central narrative follows the traditional characters of a jealous miller, his beautiful young wife, and a lecherous corregidor (the local magistrate, whose position was symbolized by his three-cornered hat). The oafish but persistent corregidor is thwarted at every turn, is mistakenly arrested by his own constables, and suffers the peasant justice of being tossed in a blanket for a finale of general merriment.

For Diaghilev, Falla increased the size of the orchestra and eliminated some incidental music from the second part while adding a solo specifically for Léonide Massine, who choreographed the ballet and danced the part of the miller. Pablo Picasso designed the sets and costumes, and at his request Falla wrote an introduction and solo song to be performed before Picasso's curtain went up. The ballet had a hugely

successful premiere in London in 1919 (as *Le tricorné*), establishing Falla's international reputation.

The Second Suite opens with the miller's neighbors gathering to celebrate the Feast of St. John and dancing seguidillas based on traditional themes, including one also popularized in Gerónimo Giménez's zarzuela *La boda de Luis Alonso*. The miller then has his solo, a dark and fiery flamenco farruca, the earthiest dance in the ballet. All of the ballet's themes combine in the final jota, a chaotic climax and jubilant resolution in one.

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Arturo Márquez (b. 1950): Danzón No. 2

Born in Mexico, Arturo Márquez spent his middle school and high school years in La Puente, California, where he began his musical training. After he returned to Mexico, Márquez studied at the Conservatory of Music and the Institute of Fine Arts in Mexico, followed by private study in Paris with Jacques Castérède, and then at the California Institute of the Arts with Morton Subotnick, Stephen Mosko, Mel Powell, and James Newton.

At that time, Márquez was much interested in avant garde techniques and processes, although his time at Cal Arts gave him ideas about how jazz and world music elements could be added to the mix. His first *Danzón*, composed in 1992, shows how that was beginning to play out. It was essentially an electronic piece for tape and optional saxophone, but including Minimalist aspects and references to the traditional *danzón*, an old salon dance from Cuba that became very popular in Veracruz and then in Mexico City, where it still holds sway.

This initial elaboration on the *danzón* proved crucial for Márquez, renewing his own musical language in a turn away from Modernist impulses. His *Danzón No. 2*, one of the most popular pieces of "classical" music of the last quarter-century, confirmed this new direction.

"The idea of writing the *Danzón No. 2* originated in 1993 during a trip to Malinalco with the painter Andrés Fonseca and the dancer Irene Martínez, both of whom are experts in salon dances with a special

passion for the danzón, which they were able to transmit to me from the beginning, and also during later trips to Veracruz and visits to the Colonia Salón in Mexico City,” the composer writes. “From these experiences onward, I started to learn the danzón’s rhythms, its form, its melodic outline, and to listen to the old recordings by Acerina and his Danzonera Orchestra.

I was fascinated and I started to understand that the apparent lightness of the danzón is only like a visiting card for a type of music full of sensuality and qualitative seriousness, a genre which old Mexican people continue to dance with a touch of nostalgia and a jubilant escape towards their own emotional world; we can fortunately still see this in the embrace between music and dance that occurs in the State of Veracruz and in the dance parlors of Mexico City.”

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OUR PERFORMERS

REBECCA MILLER CONDUCTOR



California-born conductor Rebecca Miller has earned an international reputation for her compelling, insightful, and energetic presence on the podium and for her ability to communicate with audiences of all ages. Recent guest-conducting includes the Kuopio Symphony Orchestra, Västerås Sinfonietta, DalaSinfoniettan, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, New Haven Symphony Orchestra, Gävle Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Swan, The Orchestra Now, The Bard Music Festival, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, London Mozart Players, London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, City of London Sinfonia, National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional de Mexico, and at the BBC Proms in the Royal Albert Hall. Following her debut with the Uppsala Chamber Orchestra in Sweden, she was immediately re-invited and appointed Chief Conductor, a post which she held from 2019-2023.

In previous seasons, Rebecca has guest-conducted the Houston Symphony, Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, Reno Philharmonic, Bakersfield Symphony, Santa Cruz Symphony, Chicago College of the Performing Arts, Huntsville Symphony, Williamsport Symphony, and Musiq Houston, and with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra in Israel. Firstprize winner in the Eduardo Mata International Conducting Competition, she has conducted throughout Mexico, including repeated engagements with the Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional and Orquesta Filarmonica del UNAM, and the state orchestras of Yucatan, Aguascalientes, and Sinaloa. In 2017, Rebecca was also featured in the Bruno Walter National Conductors Preview with the Nashville Symphony.

Rebecca's discography includes CDs with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (CPE Bach Symphonies / Signum Records, which made the final shortlist for a 2014 Gramophone Award), with the BBC Concert Orchestra (Henry Hadley Orchestral works / Dutton Epoch), with the BBC Scottish Symphony (piano concertos by Amy Beach, Dorothy Howell, Cecil Chaminade / Hyperion Records), and three CDs with the Royal Northern Sinfonia (Haydn Symphonies / Signum Records; George Frederick Bristow's 'Jullien Symphony' / New World Records; Concertos by Aaron Jay Kernis / Signum Records).

Rebecca is passionate about her work with young musicians – she has recently started regular partnerships with the National Children's Orchestra and the with the London Symphony Orchestra Discovery, and previously worked with the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland, NYO Wales, and NYOGB, with the Chicago College of the Performing Arts, and with the National Youth Orchestra of Venezuela (Teresa Carreño), much to the acclaim of its late founder José Antonio Abreu. She was conductor at the Royal Academy of Music's Junior Department for many years, where she formed the groundbreaking and unique JA Classical Orchestra, and works regularly with the Southbank Sinfonia in London, where she was Associate Conductor for three years.

As Director of Orchestras at Royal Holloway University of London, she has been widely acclaimed for building the orchestral programme to new heights – starting an orchestral scholarship programme, initiating a side-by-side programme with the London Mozart Players, securing high-profile engagements (including 'Magna Carta 800 at Runnymede' a project with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Temple Church Choir, performed

in the the presence of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and 4000 dignitaries and honoured guests), and establishing a new initiative called 'Music +', which aims to build bridges through music with interdepartmental projects and interdisciplinary research.

Previously, Rebecca served as Resident Conductor of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and American Conducting Fellow of The Houston Symphony, and Assistant Conductor of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. She holds a B.Mus. in Piano Performance from Oberlin Conservatory, an M.Mus in Orchestral Conducting from Northwestern University, and for two years was the Paul Woodhouse Junior Fellow in Orchestral Conducting at London's Royal College of Music.

rebeccamiller.net



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Free entry to all



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WHO'S WHO

ROYAL HOLLOWAY FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

For more information about this music group, please search for **@rhysymphonyorchestra** on social media

Violin 1

Nicole Yuen *
James Tretheway
Christopher Bacon *
Rachel Pankhurst
Lily Thompson
Catherine McAlpine
Paul Kam
Joseph McCarthy
Tristan Hail
Luca Parr

Violin 2

Phedra Low *
Livia Domaingue *
Hannah Lam
Andreas Karapanagiotidis
Elodie Fifield
Solveiga Urbanaviciute
Terry Chen
Winston Seng Ung

Viola

Laura Field *
Harry Aldridge *
Frederik Simmen
Poppy Shingler
Maisie Pearce
Isobel Wroe
Phoebe Canell

Cello

Naoki Aso *
Kian Jan-Dickens

Evelyn Pong

Bella Hughes
Claudia Buchanan
Jasmine Akibo-Betts
Jocelyn Hails
Niamh Sherwood
Thomas Homer

Double Bass

Owen Morgan
Owen Ward

Flute

Gwendolyn
Schneider *
Klara Sweeney
Aleksandar Blanus
Iris-Amelia Davies
Chiara Mankiewicz

Oboe

Katherine Pinnell
Marko Blanus

Clarinet

Ben Hall
Claudia Smith
Charlotte Vosper
Josephine Edwards

Bassoon

Anjeli Valydon *
Luke Passmore*
Rosina Murray

French Horn

Josephine Palmer *
Joshua Davis *
Kerin Black ^
Arran Litster

Trumpet

James McPherson *
Marilla Evans
Katharine Last
Peter So

Trombone

Catriona McIntosh
Lara Casula
Myles Muston

Tuba

Owen Knott

Harp

Charlotte Farrugia
Alis Huws ^

Percussion

Dusan Novakovic
Lena Gore
Joshua Li
Phoebe Bonnar
Theo Wolstenholme
Reece Walker

*Denotes Orchestral
Scholar

^Denotes guest player