



EVENT PROGRAMME

INTERNATIONAL
CONCERT SERIES
2025-2026

Department of Music

Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

**ROYALHOLLOWAY.AC.UK/
MUSIC/EVENTS**





DISCOVER **VOX HUMANA: THE 2025-26 INTERNATIONAL CONCERT SERIES AT ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. A YEAR OF WORLD-CLASS MUSIC DEDICATED TO THE POWER OF THE HUMAN VOICE, CONTINUING A CELEBRATED VOCAL TRADITION THAT BEGAN IN 1886.**

This season, curated by Dr Nathan James Dearden in his 10th year, celebrates two major milestones: the 20th anniversary of Rupert Gough as Director of Choral Music, whose leadership has shaped the acclaimed Choir of Royal Holloway, defining choral excellence at the university, and the upcoming launch of the Choral Academy in May 2026. This legacy inspires a diverse programme - from intimate solo song, transcriptions for violin, guitar, to soprano saxophone, to dramatic scenas, orchestral vocalise, folk explorations, and the collective power of choral music - showcasing the breadth and depth of the human voice.

THE ART OF SONG (AND MORE)

We are proud to continue our partnerships with the London Mozart Players and the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT), and to welcome world-class artists including the sublime soprano Ruby Hughes, pianist Huw Watkins, the ground-breaking Emily Francis Trio, and the peerless vocal ensemble VOCES8. The series also shines a light on the phenomenal rising stars of our time: saxophonist Rob Burton, pianist Mark Rogers, Duo Melus, and American mezzo-soprano Hayley Meth.

CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY

Most proudly, we provide a platform for our own extraordinary alumni, welcoming back trad singer and uilleann piper Seb Stone, operatic tenor Thomas Elwin, and debut the exciting new vocal choir, Omnium Ensemble, under the direction of Olivia Earl.

The 2025-26 International Concert Series at Royal Holloway promises an exciting line-up of world-class performances, showcasing renowned musicians and rising talents from around the globe, and the community of students and researchers right here at the University. Set within our stunning campus, the series brings together a wide range of genres, from classical and jazz to contemporary and global music, offering something for every taste.

We look forward to welcoming you and showcasing the exceptional musical life that makes Royal Holloway so special.

Dr Nathan James Dearden

Curator of the International Concert Series and Arts Festivals



EVENT PROGRAMME

YCAT PRESENTS...

Thursday, 9 October 2025, 8.00pm
Picture Gallery, Founder's Building

Irène Duval Violin

EVENT REPERTOIRE

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Preludio from Partita No. 3 in E for solo violin, BWV1006

Eugène-Auguste Ysaÿe (1858-1931)

Sonata No. 2 for solo violin in A minor, Op. 27

Johann Sebastian Bach

Partita No. 3 for solo violin, BWV1006

John Tavener (1944-2013)

My Gaze is ever upon you

Johann Sebastian Bach

Chaconne from Partita No.2 in D minor for solo violin, BWV1004

There will be no interval during this evening's event

Estimated event finish time: 9.15pm

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

For news about our future events, please visit royalholloway.ac.uk/music/events

PROGRAMME NOTES

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Partita No.2 in D minor for solo violin, BWV1004

Partita No. 3 in E for solo violin, BWV1006

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) the composer and keyboard player has become such a towering figure in the 250-plus years since his death that we sometimes forget just how wide-ranging his musical gifts were. One of his early jobs was actually as a violinist at the small ducal court of Weimar in the heart of German-speaking central Europe. It was to this brief tenure - six months in 1703 - that we can trace the beginnings of Bach's sonatas and partitas for solo violin, a set of pieces born as much from practice as from imagination.

When he arrived in Weimar in January 1703, the 17-year-old Bach already had a wealth of musical experience to his credit. His inquisitive mind made him receptive to all sorts of influences - Johann Nikolaus Forkel, his first biographer, tells us that Bach's nature "impelled him to try to do, to see, and to hear everything which, according to the ideas he then entertained, could contribute to his improvement." In Weimar, Bach met the violinist Johann Paul von Westhoff, another member of the court's musical establishment and the author of six partitas for solo violin, published in Dresden in 1696. Westhoff was one of the leading violinists of his day, spoken of by his contemporaries in the same breath as the great Bohemian virtuoso Heinrich Biber. The young Bach, in his only professional gig as a violinist, must have been impressed.

Bach soon left Weimar; records document that he was paid for only two three-month periods, which puts his departure in June of 1703, and he had a new post as organist at the New Church in Arnstadt, about 20 miles southwest of Weimar, by August. The salary in Arnstadt was double his Weimar pay, without the onerous extramusical duties - including valet service - that had attended his Weimar position. He apparently continued to pursue his violin playing, because by July 1708, he was back in Weimar as chamber musician and organist. A fugue in G

minor for violin and harpsichord, BWV 1025, is all that survives from this second Weimar period to shed light on his development as a violinist, and it indicates the emergence of a performing technique wholly in keeping with what we find in the sonatas and partitas.

Bach may have actually started working on the sonatas and partitas while he was still in Weimar - he left that post in 1717 to become Kapellmeister (the 18th-century German equivalent of music director) in Cöthen, a princely seat about 60 miles northeast of Weimar, a promotion prestigious enough that Bach was willing to endure four weeks' imprisonment to get out of his Weimar job. The autograph fair copy of the sonatas and partitas is dated 1720, midway through Bach's Cöthen tenure. The sonatas and partitas were almost certainly performed at the prince's palace there during one (or perhaps spread across several) of the court's regular musical evenings - scant documentary evidence means that much of Bach's biography is necessarily conjecture. Bach himself may have been the violinist, and several other names have been proposed, including the "premier cammer musicus" (i.e. concertmaster) in Cöthen, Joseph Spiess.

That Bach would have been up to the technical demands of the pieces is confirmed by his son Carl Philipp Emanuel (1714-88), who, reminiscing to Forkel in the 1770s, recalled his father's playing. "In his youth, and until the approach of old age, he played the violin cleanly and penetratingly, and thus kept the orchestra in better order than he could have done with the harpsichord. He understood to perfection the possibilities of all stringed instruments. This is evidenced by his solos for the violin and for the violoncello without bass. One of the greatest violinists once told me that he had seen nothing more perfect for learning to be a good violinist, and could suggest nothing better to anyone eager to learn, than the said violin solos without bass."

The sonatas and partitas reflect Bach's skill as both performer and composer. Only someone involved with the violin as a performer could know its possibilities and limitations so well. The works demonstrate a level of technical and musical mastery previous composers had not approached, and, indeed, they are still one of the high peaks of the violin literature. Bach's chosen genres allow for a musical variety of staggering scope, encompassing everything from densely worked counterpoint to

elegant courtly dances composed in a style marked by rhythmic and melodic invention underpinned by complex harmonic shifts. The partitas offer up a sequence of dance-inspired movements, including dances rarely found in Bach, such as the Loure of the Partita No. 3, BWV 1006.

Bach maintains the formal rigour of the sonatas in the partitas - the dances Bach selects for each partita pose a series of musical challenges of their own. In the Corrente (a fast dance in triple meter) of BWV 1004, Bach plays with the rhythm, alternating between triplets and dotted figures to create a swinging effect. The Sarabanda (a slow, majestic dance, also in triple meter, of Spanish or Mexican origin) of the same partita relies heavily on double-stopping (a technique in which the soloist plays two strings at the same time) and also includes a brief coda, something unusual in Bach's output. The coda acts as a bridge to the ensuing Giga (or jig, a fast dance typically in compound rhythm - in this case, 12/8 - of English and Irish origin), which normally would comprise the final movement in a partita or suite. But here, Bach continues with one of his greatest achievements in any genre, the gripping final Ciaccona, a fifteen-minute set of 64 variations on a four-bar theme. The vast scale of the movement can also be characterized as two outer sections in the minor mode framing a central section in the major. The shift between major and minor in the movement is quite striking, providing a serene, exalted contrast to the surrounding disquiet. The movement ends as it began, with the violin stating the four-bar theme. In between, in the words of the legendary Bach biographer Philip Spitta, "The overpowering wealth of forms pouring from a few and scarcely noticeable sources displays not only the most perfect knowledge of the technique of the violin, but also the most absolute mastery over an imagination the like of which no other composer was ever endowed with."

Of the six partitas works, the present one stands alone on a lofty summit, and this by virtue of the towering Chaconne that is its final movement. Preceding this finale are four dance movements that comprise the traditional Baroque suite: allemande, courante, sarabande, and gigue. Although they are splendid examples of their genre, they end by being an introduction to the monumental Chaconne, which is a set of more than 60 variations on a simple bass theme.

In a lengthy description of the Chaconne, the great Bach scholar Philipp

Spitta ends with these memorable words, "This Chaconne is a triumph of spirit over matter such as even Bach never repeated in a more brilliant manner." Enough said.

BWV 1006 begins with an exuberant Preludio, one of Bach's most famous instrumental compositions and one which he recast for organ and orchestra in the Cantata, BWV 29. The sequence of dances that follows omits the Sarabanda, replacing it with the Loure, a slow, elegant version of a gigue. In the Menuet II, the player holds a drone (B natural) for three bars, giving the courtly dance a folksy feel, another imaginative touch from this most inventive and original of composers found, paradoxically, in the unrelenting constraint of writing for a solo instrument. The works are, to quote from the composer Johann Friedrich Reichardt's review of the first printed edition of the sonatas and partitas (1805), "perhaps the greatest example in any art form of a master's ability to move with freedom and assurance, even in chains."

EUGÈNE-AUGUSTE YSAÏE (1858-1931)

Sonata No. 2 for solo violin in A minor, Op. 27

Another option for a violin sonata is for the fiddle to go it alone, without a partner, equal or otherwise. That presents significant technical challenges to composer and performer alike, challenges not often accepted. Most famous are Bach's three solo sonatas (and three solo partitas, a genre more like a suite).

One who did take up the challenge was Eugène Ysaÿe. A shaping and sustaining influence on French music from late Romanticism through Impressionism, Ysaÿe was a thoroughly rounded musician as well as one of the most revered and accomplished violinists of his day. He received the dedications of Franck's Violin Sonata (as a wedding present), Chausson's Poème, and Debussy's String Quartet, among many other pieces that he championed. He was also an esteemed conductor - including four years leading the Cincinnati Symphony during World War I - and, particularly as he grew older, a composer of great originality. Inspired by a Joseph Szigeti performance of Bach's six sonatas and partitas for unaccompanied violin, Ysaÿe composed his own set of six

solo sonatas, Op. 27, in 1923. Each of the sonatas was dedicated to a younger violinist and reflects something of Ysaÿe's concept of the dedicatee's personality.

In the second sonata of the set (dedicated to Jacques Thibaud), Bach is not just the inspiration but the "obsession." The first movement begins with the opening of Bach's own Prelude from the E-major Partita, which Ysaÿe then violently deconstructs, bringing in intimations of the Dies irae chant from the traditional Requiem mass. The sorrowful, muted "Malinconia" also morphs into the Dies irae, which continues to haunt the rest of the Sonata.

In the "Dance of the Shades," "the souls of the dead arise and dance a nocturnal sarabande," according to Ysaÿe's son. The pizzicato sarabande is also the theme for six ensuing character variations. The first treats the melody as a modal folksong, and the second is a musette, a type of peasant dance with droning bass that Bach sometimes referenced. The third variation is also Bachian, a two-part invention. The fourth variation is slithery, with weird melodic tendrils drooping down from notes of the chant. The fifth variation is a spidery dance into the stratosphere, and the sixth is a bravura perpetual motion whirl. "The Furies" is the dynamic finale, full of big contrasts between demonic outbursts and ghostly ponticello, abraded wisps of sound produced by bowing close to the bridge of the instrument.

JOHN TAVENER (1944-2013)

My Gaze is ever upon You

My Gaze is ever upon You is a series of sixteen gazes, moments and ecstatic breaths written in Trinitarian guise - written for solo violin with taped violin and a string drone pre-recorded in a reverberant acoustic. The music was written during two periods of prolonged stays in my house in Greece. As far as possible, they are spontaneous reactions to people, to landscapes, to animals, to creeping things - an attempt to create a Theophany and an anthropophany. To see God in everything, for "everything that lives is Holy". It is dedicated to Clio Gould and is written in loving memory of Matthew Sullivan.

Composer's Note; John Tavener

EVENT PERFORMERS

IRÈNE DUVAL VIOLIN



Born in France, to a French father and Korean mother, Irène Duval grew up in Japan, Indonesia and Hong Kong before returning to France at the age of 11. Since graduating from the Conservatoire de Paris and Kronberg Academy, Irène is firmly establishing herself as a compelling and versatile performer with a strong interest in combining little-known works with works central to the repertoire.

Praised for her mastery of phrasing and of the dramatic dimension (Diapason), astonishing virtuosity (Revelation Classiques) and her infinite delicacy (Le Populaire du centre), Irène has won multiple international competitions and is an active performer of concerti, recitals and chamber music.

Recent highlights include her debut with the Philharmonia Orchestra at the first symphonic concert given by an international orchestra in Mauritius, her debut in Australia at Bendigo Chamber Music Festival, at the Verbier Festival, replacing Lisa Batiashvili at short notice, in Budapest at Kamara.hu Festival, and her debut with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe at the inauguration concert of the Casals Forum in Kronberg. This season, she gives concerts at the Festival de Musica de Canarias with Joshua Bell, Blythe-Engstroem, and Steven Isserlis; at Wigmore Hall with Jean-Efflam Bavouzet and Steven I., with Angus Webster; she returns to the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with Mendelssohn Concerto; she plays in Sheffield for a celebration of Gabriel Fauré's music. Fauré is the central composer of her next recital recording with Angus to be released by Capriccio this year

Irène has performed widely in Europe, giving recitals at major venues and festivals including the Konzerthaus Berlin, Théâtre des Champs Elysées, Salle Gaveau, Dresdner Kulturpalast, Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad, Philharmonie de Paris, and Les Folles Journée de Nantes.

Solo highlights include collaborations with the Dresdner Philharmonie, Orchestre d'Auvergne, Sinfonia Varsovia at the National Forum in Tokyo, Kremerata Baltica, working with such conductors as Maxim Emelyanychev, Jamie Phillips, Michael Sanderling, Robert Trevino, and Roberto Fores Veses.

Chamber music holds a big space in Irène's heart and she feels lucky to have had the chance to play with musicians such as Gidon Kremer, Olli Mustonen, Ferenc Rados, and Christian Tetzlaff. She participates with great pleasure in Open Chamber Music at IMS Prussia Cove in Cornwall, Krzyzowa Chamber Music Festival in Poland, and was invited to Norsjo Chamber Music Festival in Norway and Chamber Music Connects the World Festival at Kronberg Academy.

Irène plays a beautiful Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume violin, which is kindly on loan to her through the Beare's International Violin Society.

In 2021 Irène was a prize-winner at the Young Classical Artists Trust International Auditions.

ireneduval.com

This event is presented as part of the International Concert Series 2025-26 - VOX HUMANA - at Royal Holloway, in collaboration with the Young Classical Artists Trust.

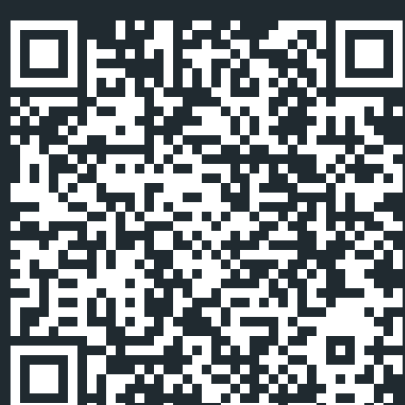


Department of Music

Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

INTERNATIONAL CONCERT SERIES 2025-26 VOX HUMANA

**A year of world-class music dedicated to the power
of the human voice, continuing a celebrated vocal
tradition at Royal Holloway that began in 1886**



**MORE INFORMATION
AND TO BOOK YOUR TICKETS
ROYALHOLLOWAY.AC.UK/
MUSIC/EVENTS**



**ROYALHOLLOWAY.AC.UK/
MUSIC/EVENTS**