



EVENT PROGRAMME

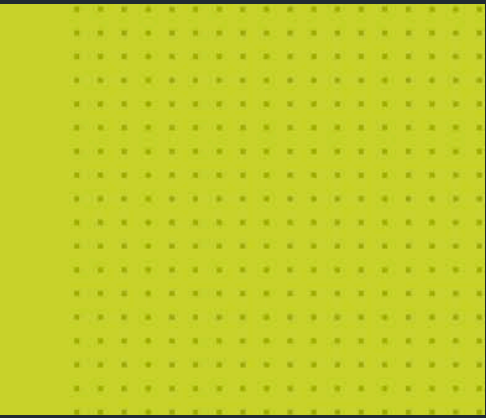
INTERNATIONAL
CONCERT SERIES
2025-2026

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

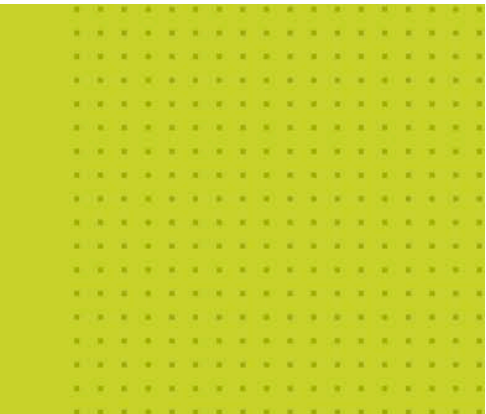
Most proudly, we provide a platform for our own extraordinary alumni, welcoming back trad singer and uilleann piper Seb Stone, operatic tenor Thomas Elwin, and debut the exciting new vocal choir, Omnium Ensemble, under the direction of Olivia Earl.

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

TALES FROM THE STAGE AND FRONTIER

Wednesday, 3 December 2025, 7.30pm

Windsor Building Auditorium

Royal Holloway Symphony Orchestra

Rebecca Miller Conductor

with

Hayley Meth Mezzo soprano

EVENT REPERTOIRE

to include:

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Billy the Kid Suite

Amy Beach (1867-1944)

Maria Stuart: Scena and Aria for alto and orchestra, Op.18

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1872-1943)

Vocalise

Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Romeo and Juliet Fantasy-Overture, TH42

There will be a short interval during this evening's event

Estimated event finish time: 9.45pm

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

AARON COPLAND (1900-1990)

Billy the Kid Suite

1. THE OPEN PRAIRIE
2. STREET IN A FRONTIER TOWN
3. CARD GAME AT NIGHT
4. GUN BATTLE
5. CELEBRATION AFTER BILLY'S CAPTURE
6. BILLY'S DEMISE
7. THE OPEN PRAIRIE (EPILOGUE)

The simplicity and directness of Aaron Copland's best-loved works from the 1930s and 1940s - a period that saw the creation of his iconic trio of ballet scores: *Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo*, and *Appalachian Spring* - represent a populist style at which the composer arrived only after an adventurous period of experimenting with modernism and the then-fashionable symphonic jazz.

The lingering Great Depression intensified Copland's urge, shared with many of his artistic peers, to communicate with a broader audience. Another pragmatic basis for the development of Copland's forthright "American sound" can be found in the contexts for which he was writing, including dance. It was largely in tandem with collaborative projects involving specifically American subject matter, in the genres of ballet, theater, and film, that Copland evolved this language. *Billy the Kid*, which premiered in 1938, marked a major breakthrough toward the later ballets.

The idea for *Billy the Kid* was pitched by the ambitious young impresario Lincoln Kirstein for his newly formed Ballet Caravan, a touring company that was a forerunner of the New York City Ballet. Playing a sort of American Serge Diaghilev, Kirstein fixed on Copland as the Stravinsky with whom he would partner to establish a thriving indigenous ballet that held its own in comparison to the standard Franco-Russian traditions of the time.

Billy the Kid was designed as a one-act ballet, with choreography by Eugene Loring, drawn from a semi-fictional treatment of the notorious outlaw Henry McCarty (1859-1881) - also known as William H. Bonney. Billy appears as a quasi-mythical figure, a romanticized emblem of the passions and dangers of the Wild West. Copland recalled that he approached the prospect of this folk ballet with “a firm resolve to write simply,” believing that as part of a stage work, “music should play a modest role, helping when help is needed, but never injecting itself as if it were the main business of the evening.” In the process, he produced music that has held its own as a beloved concert staple.

Copland frames the story with widely spaced harmonies that vividly conjure a sense of the open prairie and, importantly, its associated sense of loneliness, all set amid the context of westward migration. “Street in a Frontier Town,” where we first encounter Billy as a boy of twelve, cleverly recomposes bits of cowboy tunes in a way that adds much more than “flavor.” During a drunken brawl, Billy witnesses his mother accidentally being shot in the crowd and instantly stabs those responsible. This sets the pattern for Billy’s criminal career as an adult. “Card Game at Night” establishes a lonely, reflective mood “under the stars.” In dramatic contrast, violence erupts once more in the percussion-heavy “Gun Battle” as Billy is ambushed by his former friend, Sheriff Pat Garrett. In a local saloon, complete with out-of-tune piano, a tipsy crowd celebrates the outlaw’s capture. The Suite omits the ballet’s episode of Billy escaping from jail into the desert, where he romances his sweetheart, but cuts to the scene of Billy’s death after he has been caught for the last time. The opening prairie music returns, transformed so as to convey, as Copland put it, “the idea of a new dawn breaking.”

AMY BEACH (1867-1944)

María Stuart: Scena and Aria for alto and orchestra, Op.18

Known as the first female U.S. composer to have her music recognized in Europe without the benefit of European study, Beach composed Maria Stuart early on in her career in 1891 when establishing her own voice as a professional musician. Maria Stuart delves into a German monologue taken from a poem by Friedrich Schiller, that reflects the life of Mary, Queen of Scots, when imprisoned and approaching her death through one continuous scene and piece.

The piece opens with low strings, horns and woodwinds creating a dark colour with unsettling harmonies outlining Mary's emotional turmoil. This leads to the recitative-like opening as the alto soloist enters with a speech-like style as the orchestral accompaniment becomes sparse allowing the words to stand in a vulnerable fashion.

The piece shifts to a more lyrical aria section when the orchestral harmonies grow warmer as the poem recalls happier memories. As strings tremolo and there becomes sharper harmonies, the vocal writing becomes more intense, using more of the vocal range as we feel a fight between fear and destiny giving a climax. The orchestra becomes softer as the vocal line becomes more sustained when Mary accepts her destiny.

O Dank, Dank diesen freundlich grünen Bäumen,
Die meines Kerkers Mauern mir verstecken!
Ich will mich frei und glücklich träumen,
Warum aus meinem süßen Wahn mich wecken?
Umfängt mich nicht der weite Himmelsschoß?
Die Blicke, frei und fessellos,
Ergehen sich in ungemeßnen Räumen.
Dort, wo die grauen Nebelberge ragen,
Fängt meines Reiches Grenze an,
Und diese Wolken, die nach Mittag jagen,
Sie suchen Frankreichs fernen Ozean.
Eilende Wolken! Segler der Lüfte!
Wer mit euch wanderte, mit euch schiffte!
Grüßet mir freundlich mein Jugenland!
Ich bin gefangen, ich bin in Banden,
Ach, ich hab keinen andern Gesandten!
Frei in Lüften ist euren Bahn,
Ihr seid nicht dieser Königin untertan.

Hörst du das Hifthorn? Hörst du's klingen,
Mächtigen Rufes, durch Feld und Hain?
Ach, auf das mutige Roß mich zu schwingen,
An den fröhlichen Zug mich zu reihn!
Noch mehr! O die bekannte Stimme,
Schmerzlich süßer Erinnerung voll.
Oft vernahm sie mein Ohr mit Freuden,
Auf den Hochlands bergichten Heiden,
Wenn die tobende Jagd erscholl.

*O thanks, thanks to these trees so green and friendly,
that from my eyes the prison walls conceal!
I now may dream, once more in happiness and peace,
Ah why awake me from my fading sweet illusion?
Surrounds me not the azure vault of Heav'n?
Unfettered, and free, my wand'ring eyes may range
O'er endless space, in ever-boundless freedom.
There, where yon misty mountains rise in grandeur,
I can my empire's border see,
The clouds above me, to the South are flying,
Are seeking the ever distant sea of France.
Wand'ring clouds, sail thro' the air,
Ah could I roam with you to my home so fair!
Carry my love to my native land!
By foes surrounded, I here am captive,
Ah, alone and friendless, deserted!
Thro' the heavens your path is seen,
Never ruled are ye by this proud Queen!*

*Hear'st thou, the hunters? Hear'st thou the horn gaily
sounding?
Hear its echoes, thro' wood and plain?
O could I now on my swift steed be flying,
With my joyous friends again!
Once more! The well-remember'd voice wrings my
heart with anguish,
Sad and sweet, its tones to me!
Oft they greeted mine ear, resounding,
O'er the Highlands, where hounds were bounding
And the echoes rang again.*

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1872-1943)

Vocalise

Sergei Rachmaninoff wrote countless gorgeous and unforgettable melodies, none more famous than his *Vocalise*, a song without text. It was composed in 1915 as the last of his 14 songs or Romances, Op 34. Written originally for a high voice and piano, and arranged for orchestra and voice by Rachmaninoff himself, it contains no words but is sung using only one vowel of the singer's choice.

Rachmaninoff wrote the song for the star coloratura soprano Antonina Nezhdanova of the Moscow Grand Opera. She initially didn't like the lack of text, but the composer convinced her that the music required no such context and that the single syllable was enough. "What need is there of words," he asked her, "when you will be able to convey everything better and more expressively...by your voice". In *Vocalise*, the absence of words does not imply a lack of meaning or emotional depth. It follows Russia's tradition of art songs, which is rich in ruminations on the difficulties and sadness of life, thus giving the piece a deeply melancholy character. Rachmaninoff seemed certain that not all music required text to convey intense emotion; rather, "the absence of words can be one of the contributing factors to its immense emotional intensity and sorrow."

PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Romeo and Juliet Fantasy-Overture, TH42

Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasy* after Shakespeare was the composer's musical response to the titular play, which features dramatic contrasts between love and violent strife and between personal fate and social expectation. Tchaikovsky opposes his aggressive theme of conflict with one of yearning love, now one of his most familiar melodies.

When the high-strung and hypersensitive Tchaikovsky chose particular pieces of literature to set to music, he usually read himself into the leading characters and their predicaments. (He was especially fond of stories involving unrequited or tragic love, such as Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and *Queen of Spades*, which he turned into operas.) *Romeo and Juliet* seems to have been no exception. The passionate immediacy of the "fantasy-overture" was stimulated in part by the recent personal experience of a love affair gone bad. For Tchaikovsky, a gay man living a highly conflicted and secretive private life in socially conservative Tsarist Russia, such experiences were doubly painful because they had to be concealed and - in a certain sense - denied. Scholar Alexander Poznansky proposes that the amour was Eduard Zak, who was 15 years old, about the same age as the title characters, at the time *Romeo and Juliet* was composed. A few years later, in 1873, Zak committed suicide - just as Romeo and Juliet do in the play's final scene.

Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* strives to condense a five-act tragedy of supreme verbal and dramatic density into a “fantasy-overture” lasting only eighteen minutes. Tchaikovsky does not supply an exact program for this piece, which he completed in 1869 (at 29) and subsequently revised twice, in 1870 and in 1880. Instead he focuses on the main idea of hostility between the warring Montagues and Capulets, and the soaring “star-crossed” passion of the young lovers. Nor does the music contain any reference to the local colour of Italian Verona. It begins with a lengthy slow introduction, in the manner of a prelude or invocation, sombre and foreboding; harp arpeggios add a sense of dreamy historical distance. Suddenly, the key changes to B minor and the mood becomes agitated with the entrance of what one might call the “feuding theme.” The great love theme, introduced by the Cor anglais, is heavy with yearning and sensuality, an irresistible tune that has been endlessly recycled in popular songs (e.g., “Our love is like a melody,” recorded by Frank Sinatra) and movie scores. Tchaikovsky continues to develop these vibrant musical ideas, ending with a plaintive restatement of the love theme against timpani sounding a funereal beat.

EVENT PERFORMERS

REBECCA MILLER Conductor

California-born conductor Rebecca Miller has earned international acclaim for her compelling, insightful, and energetic presence on the podium and for her ability to communicate with audiences of all ages. She spreads her work between professional, amateur and youth orchestras and choirs, and is passionate about music's relevance to our society, artistic citizenship, and championing unduly-neglected female composers. She is currently Director of Orchestras at Royal Holloway University, Principal Conductor of the Royal Orchestral Society, Principal Conductor of the Bishop's Stortford Sinfonia, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestra of the Swan. She most recently served as Chief Conductor of the Uppsala Chamber Orchestra in Sweden from 2019-2023.



Her guest conducting includes the Kuopio Symphony Orchestra, Gävle Symphony, Västerås Symphony, DalaSinfonietta, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, 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, and National Youth Orchestra of Scotland. First prize winner in the Eduardo Mata International Conducting Competition, she has conducted throughout Mexico, including repeated engagements with the Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional, 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), and 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). Her most recent recording is of the orchestral music of Dorothy Howell with the BBC Concert Orchestra for Signum, released in March 2024. Until now these works have rarely been performed, and most are unpublished and only exist in manuscript form. Featuring 4 works receiving their world premiere recording, Rebecca aims to help revive Dorothy's music and give her the recognition she deserves.

Rebecca is passionate about her work with young musicians – she works regularly with the National Children's Orchestra and LSO Discovery, and has also guest conducted the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland, Wales, and Great Britain, and the National Youth Orchestra of Venezuela. 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 previously served as Associate Conductor of the Southbank Sinfonia in London.

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 presence of the Late 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.

Highlights of the 2024/2025 season include performances with the Kuopio Symphony Orchestra, the Uppsala Chamber Orchestra, the National Children’s Orchestra of Great Britain, and the Munich Symphony Orchestra at the Brucknerhaus Linz in Austria. The upcoming season will see Rebecca lead performances with Bath Philharmonia and at the Texas Music Festival.

HAYLEY METH

Mezzo soprano

Hayley Meth, American mezzo-soprano, is currently pursuing her second year of postgraduate studies at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, where she studies under the tutelage of Samantha Malk. She is a Leverhulme Arts Scholar, and her studies are generously supported in part by The Leverhulme Trust. At Guildhall, she has appeared widely in both operatic and concert repertoire, including selections from Strauss Lieder in the ‘Songs at Six’ recital series, and operatic scenes performing the title role in Bizet’s *Carmen*, as well as roles in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, Adamo’s *Little Women*, and Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw*. She also recently covered the role of Servia in Respighi’s *Lucrezia* with the Guildhall Opera Course.



In 2023, she was selected as a Voice Fellow at Opernfest Prague, performing with the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra in Smetana Hall. In March 2025, she was named a semifinalist in the Josep Palet International Singing Competition in Martorell, Spain.

Recent engagements include Suor Dolcina in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* with the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Antonio Pappano at both the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the BBC Proms, as well as Maria Aegyptiaca in Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with The Bach Choir and the Philharmonia Orchestra at St. Paul's Cathedral.

Upcoming engagements include a recital for voice, viola, and piano as part of the West Wicklow Chamber Music Festival. Previous operatic roles include Annio (cover) in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*, Mrs. Hildebrand and Mrs. Olsen in Weill's *Street Scene*, Dritte Knabe in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, and Ludgarde in Schubert's *La croisade des dames* with Opera McGill Horizons.



ROYAL HOLLOWAY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA WHO'S WHO

Led by internationally-acclaimed conductor, Rebecca Miller, the Royal Holloway Symphony Orchestra meets weekly, giving three concerts per year in the Windsor Auditorium. The orchestra endeavours to create a lively, challenging, and social basis for orchestral life at Royal Holloway and comprises students from across the university. They also participate in side-by-side programmes with professional musicians, and through our unique partnership with the Chiltern Music Academy. In 2020-21, orchestras at Royal Holloway launched a new social action project called *Re-Orchestrating Society*, where members of orchestras at Royal Holloway work together in small teams to develop a project based around orchestras that aims to benefit society.

Past soloists have included Tim Hugh, David Pyatt, Roger Chase, Nicola Eimer, Gemma Rosefield, James Kirby, and Mark van de Wiel. There are opportunities to perform with the orchestra through the concerto competition that takes place each Spring.

Violin I

Christopher Bacon*
Rachel Pankhurst
Phedra Low*
Tristan Hail
Terry Chen
Hannah Lam
James Tretheway
Catherine McAlpine
Luca Parr
Lily Thompson
Paul Kam

Violin II

Nicole Yuen*
Livia Domaingue*
Winston Ung
Solveiga Urbanaviciute
Elodie Fifield
Angel Kasindi
Ethel Anim
Joseph McCarthy
Emma Flintham
Rose Miller
Andreas
Karapanagiotidis

Viola

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

Cello

Naoki Aso*
Kian Jan-Dickens
Isabella Hughes

Evelyn Pong
Claudia Buchanan
Jasmine Akibo-Betts
Niamh Sherwood
Jocelyn Hails
Amelie Holmes
Thomas Homer

Double Bass

Owen Morgan
Owen Ward
Nigel Smith

Flute

Gwendolyn Schneider*
Aleksander Blanusa
Klara Sweeney
Chiara Mankiewicz
Rachel Li
Iris-Amelia Davies

Oboe

Joseph Stapleton
Marko Blanusa
Katherine Pinnell

Clarinet

Benjamin Hall*
Josie Edwards
Charlotte Vosper
Claudia Smith

Bassoon

Anjeli Valydon*
Luke Passmore*
Rosina Murray

Horn

Josephine Palmer*
Joshua Davies*
Arran Litster
Kerin Black^

Trumpet

James McPherson*
Marilla Evans
Peter So
Katherine Last

Trombone

Lara Casula
Myles Muston
Catriona McIntosh

Tuba

Owen Knott

Percussion

Reece Walker
Luke Gore
Dušan Novaković
Joshua Li
Phoebe Bonnar
Theo Wolstenholme

Piano

Victoria Sak

Harp

Alis Huws ^
Charlotte Farrugia

^ indicates Guest Player
*indicates Orchestral Scholar

ORCHESTRAL COMMITTEE 2025 - 2026

Orchestra Manager Gwendolyn Schneider

Assistant Orchestra Manager Josie Palmer

Fundraising/Events Lead Hannah Lam

Fundraising/Events Assistants Tristan Hail, Josie Edwards, Isobel Wroe, Iris-Amelia Davies

Librarian Lead Phedra Low

Librarian Assistants Lily Thompson, Maisie Pearce

Social Media Lead Klara Sweeney

Social Media Assistants Iris-Amelia Davies, Isobel Wroe

Stage Leads Nicole Yuen, Phoebe Canell

Assistant Stage Chris Bacon, Terry Chen, Josie Edwards

OUR PROGRAMME NOTES

Unless otherwise stated, all of our programme notes have been written by a team of student volunteers enrolled onto the university's Concert Management & Artist Personnel Programme.

This event is presented as part of the International Concert Series 2025-26 - VOX HUMANA - at Royal Holloway University of London



Department of Music

Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

TASTE OF CHRISTMAS

THE PLATFORM SERIES

For this edition of The Platform, students will curate a concert to get you into the Yuletide spirit, with your Christmas classics to some popular festive bops. This year's 'Taste of Christmas', we are excited to platform three of our wonderful student music groups: Royal Holloway Brass Band, Founder's Choir of Royal Holloway, and members of Undergraduated, Royal Holloway's Big Band.

PAY-WHAT-YOU-CAN

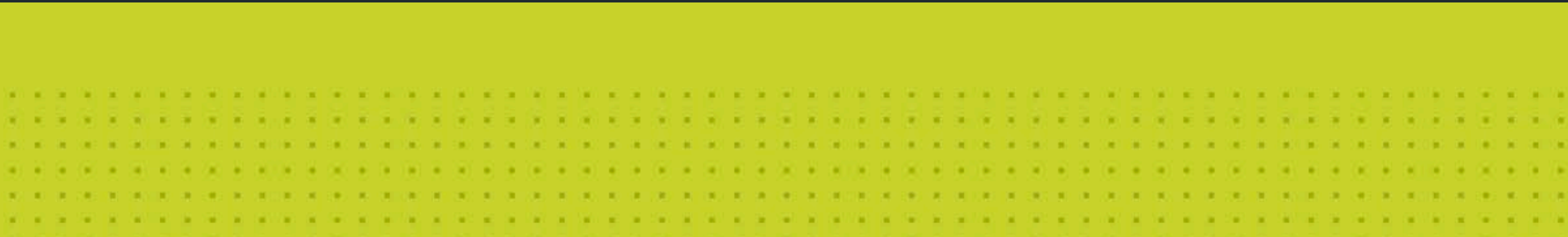
Free for students and staff
at Royal Holloway

11 December 2025, 8.00pm
Windsor Building Auditorium



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AND TO BOOK YOUR TICKETS**
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