

CBSO

City of
Birmingham
Symphony
Orchestra

An Evening with Rushil Ranjan
Symphony Hall
Thursday 27 November 2025,
7:30pm

CBSO.CO.UK

Programme £2.50



**AN EVENING
WITH RUSHIL
RANJAN**

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Rushil Ranjan

Composer, Arranger, Piano

INTRODUCTION

This is a big moment for me. An admittedly trite opening line, I know, but my journey into the world of writing for orchestra has been, in many ways, an unlikely one. I have not had the privilege of a formal classical education in either Indian or Western traditions, nor did I consciously grow up listening to these forms of music.

To be named the CBSO's first Collaborative Artist, and to have the great privilege of writing for them, is something I value deeply. Every musician on stage tonight is of the highest calibre, and together they reflect the rich and diverse artistry we have in Birmingham and beyond. Under the baton of Melvin Tay, whose insight and sensitivity have shaped this performance, I'm reminded again of how collaborative music making really is.

Given how unlikely this journey has been, my partner Abi and I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude simply to be here. To stand in this space, with this orchestra, in this city, and to share music shaped by our lives and our experiences is something we do not take for granted. We are deeply thankful for every person who has supported us and helped make tonight possible.

Tonight Abi and I present a new piece of music. Structured in four movements, this commission was written around the time our daughter was born. In the few precious hours of sleep she has managed, Abi has sat with me to create something shaped by the wonder, fear, anxiety and ultimately unbridled joy of that journey.

The piece brings together Western and Indian classical elements in a way that I hope reveals what links them. I believe that link is their shared relationship with the divine and the search for it. I am of course not the first composer to bring these musical worlds together. The old saying about standing on the shoulders of giants feels especially true for me.

This evening, in addition to premiering our new commission, I also have the rare opportunity to show you where the work comes from. Tonight's programme traces the building blocks of my musical language and the music that shaped me and made this piece possible.

It is because of the work of those great composers, visionaries who revolutionised sound and built bridges between different musical cultures, that I have the career I do today.

We hope this piece stands as a tribute to the traditions that shaped us and as a reminder that music's power lies not in its category but in its humanity. Thank you for allowing us to share ours with you.

A. R. Rahman, Bombay Theme, 5mins

John Williams, Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones: Across the Stars, 6mins

A. R. Rahman, Raga Dance, 6mins

Mascagni, Cavalleria Rusticana: Intermezzo, 4mins

Chris Cara (orch. M. Guthrie), Tephra, 7mins

Mychael Danna, Life of Pi: Pi's Lullaby, 5mins

Nitin Sawhney, Breathing Light, 5mins

Nitin Sawhney, Heart Suite - II: Morphine & Memories, 5mins

Sibelius, Symphony No.5: Allegro molto, 9mins

Interval

Rushil Ranjan, Safar (CBSO Commission, World Premiere), 25mins

Rushil Ranjan, Ruhaniyat, 20mins

Melvin Tay, Conductor

Rushil Ranjan, Composer, Arranger, Piano

Nitin Sawhney CBE, Composer, Piano

Abi Sampa, Vocalist

Aakash Odedra, Dancer

Praveen Prathapan, Bansuri

Janan Sathiendran, Tabla and Percussion

Janathan Karunakaran, Drum Kit

Sanjuran Keerthikumar, Ghatam

Jonathan Martindale, Violin

Malathy Nithiyananthan, Vocalist

Charles Ratnam, Thavil, Ganjira

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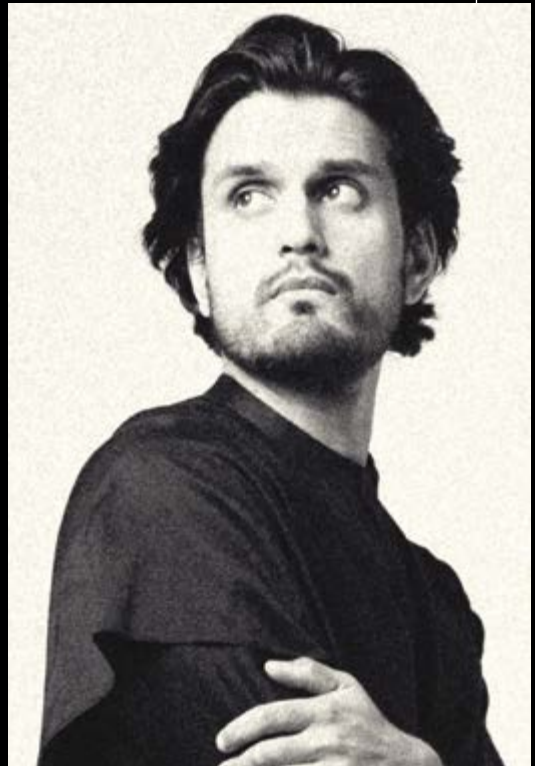
We also regularly take photographs for promotional use, so you may see a professional photographer at our concerts. Please ask a member of the front of house team if you have any questions about this.

To ensure that everyone is able to enjoy the performance, please make sure your mobile phone is set to silent.

Principal Funders:

RUSHIL RANJAN

Rushil Ranjan is a critically acclaimed, award-winning composer, arranger and producer whose work bridges orchestral, Indian classical and Sufi traditions. Entirely self-taught, his distinctive approach has made him a noted voice in contemporary cross-cultural music. He is Associate Artist at the Royal Albert Hall, Collaborative Artist with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and Artistic Partner at Manchester Camerata, and is a recipient of PRS Foundation's Composer's Fund. His output spans concert music, award-winning dance productions and BAFTA-nominated film and TV projects. Rushil is the co-creator of the Orchestral Qawwali Project, developed alongside vocalist Abi Sampa. Their reimagining of Qawwali through orchestral soundworlds has earned international acclaim, culminating in a series of sold-out performances, including a landmark 5,500-seat concert at the Royal Albert Hall. Recent highlights include his score for Aakash Odedra's 'Songs of the Bulbul', which premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival and won "Best International Show," as well as a growing body of work for film and television. He was recently announced as co-composer for an upcoming commission alongside A.R. Rahman, marking an exciting new chapter in his collaborative work.



Conductor

MELVIN TAY



© FOUBOUGRAPHY

Melvin is a conductor recognised for his wide-ranging collaborations with ensembles across diverse musical genres. These include the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, London Voices, National Youth Choir of Great Britain, and the Orchestral Qawwali Project. As a passionate advocate for contemporary music, Melvin has conducted numerous acclaimed premieres, such as Rushil Ranjan's score for Aakash Odedra Company's *Songs of the Bulbul* (Edinburgh International Festival), *Shikwa* (Bradford Literature Festival), and Zakiya Leeming's *Dangerous Matter*, a new opera exploring the story of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the origins of inoculation. He has also recorded new music for BBC Radio 3, *Blue Peter*, and a new musical by Theo Jamieson and Simon Pitts for BBC World Service. He is the Music Director of the Northern Film Orchestra and has led recording sessions for *A Gentleman in Moscow* (Paramount+), as well as *Angelina Ballerina* and *Miffy* audiobooks for Yoto. He is also a Tutor in Conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music.

Composer, Piano

NITIN SAWHNEY CBE



© SUKI DHANDA

Dr Nitin Sawhney CBE is a globally renowned musician, composer and cultural advocate. He has scored more than 70 films and television series, released 13 acclaimed solo albums, and received the 2017 Ivor Novello Lifetime Achievement Award, a CBE and nine honorary doctorates. His Mercury-nominated 1999 album *Beyond Skin* won a South Bank Show Award, whilst *Prophesy* (2001) and *Philtre* (2005) earned MOBO and BBC Radio 3 Awards. Film credits include *The Namesake*, *Midnight's Children* and *Mowgli: Legend of the Jungle*. His 2025 BAFTA-nominated score for Disney's *Tiger* follows the BAFTA-winning *Human Planet*, multiple other natural-history works, Olivier Award-winning theatre, choreography and BFI restorations. Sawhney has collaborated with Paul McCartney, Jorja Smith, Pink Floyd, Anoushka Shankar, Sting and Jeff Beck; performed at the Royal Albert Hall and Glastonbury; conducted international orchestras; and DJed at London's Fabric. Patron of the PRS Foundation and several other charities, he nurtures new talent. A 2024 Booker Prize judge and 2025 Asians Power 100 honouree, Sawhney fuses musical innovation with lasting cultural influence.

ABI SAMPA



Abi Sampa is a multi-instrumentalist, qawwal and veena virtuoso whose genre-blending approach has made her a defining voice in contemporary Sufi and fusion music. Born in North-West London to Sri Lankan Tamil parents, her multicultural upbringing shaped a musical identity rooted in both Western and Indian classical traditions, forming the foundation of her distinctive vocal and instrumental style. An Associate Artist of the Royal Albert Hall, Abi is also the co-founder and lead vocalist of the Orchestral Qawwali Project, becoming one of the few women to front a qawwali ensemble. Her powerful and expressive performances - paired with her ability to lead large classical ensembles - have captivated sold-out audiences around the world. A highly sought-after performer, Abi has collaborated with artists including Nitin Sawhney, A.R. Rahman and Rushil Ranjan. She frequently appears with orchestras such as the CBSO, RPO and Manchester Camerata. A pioneer in the UK fusion scene, her work fuses Qawwali, Carnatic and Hindustani classical music with contemporary influences, inspiring a new generation of British-Asian artists and helping redefine global interpretations of South Asian music.

AAKASH ODEDRA



© ANGELA GRABOWSKA

Aakash Odedra is an internationally acclaimed dancer and choreographer celebrated for his distinctive movement language that merges Indian classical dance forms with contemporary expression. His work acts as a bridge between cultures and traditions of the East and West, blending virtuosic movement and storytelling to explore themes of transformation and humanity. Aakash is deeply committed to using dance as a language for social connection and transformation, leading projects that engage marginalized communities and young artists worldwide. An Associate Artist of Sadlers' Wells, and recipient of multiple honours including the Bessie Award and Dora Award, Aakash continues to redefine the vocabulary of contemporary South Asian dance, positioning it at the forefront of global performance practice. His work is a testament to the power of movement as a bridge between worlds, identities, and imaginations.

Bansuri

PRAVEEN PRATHAPAN



© JANANIE BASKARAN

Praveen Prathapan is a British Indian/Sri Lankan Carnatic musician who has worked with a diverse range of artists from Anoushka Shankar to Emeli Sandé. A disciple of Sri Chittoor T. Raghavaraman, Praveen has devoted the last decade to bringing the Carnatic flute to audiences across the globe, from California to Kazakhstan, at prestigious venues including Times Square and Buckingham Palace. He remains a lifelong student and continues to deepen his understanding of the Carnatic flute while exploring new approaches to this ancient musical tradition.

Tabla

JANAN SATHIENDRAN



© LUCA P AND ZEROCLASSIKAL

Janan Sathiendran is a London-born percussionist whose musical identity is shaped by the city's rich cultural diversity. Trained since childhood in both the Hindustani and Carnatic classical traditions and raised in a home surrounded by a wide range of musical influences, he developed a deep and adaptable artistic instinct from an early age. Consequently, he is a versatile performer and collaborator, capable of working fluently in a number of roles across genres — from Indian classical music and dance to Qawwali, Western classical, contemporary and urban sounds — a breadth that has taken him across the world, performing with artists such as Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and A.R. Rahman. Janan is a core member of the Orchestral Qawwali Project, contributing a refined rhythmic voice to major orchestral and cross-cultural productions. Alongside his performing career, he works as a doctor in the NHS, drawing on the discipline and empathy of both fields to inform his practice.

Symphony Hall
Friday 12 June 2026, 7:30pm

THE CBSO & THE ORCHESTRAL QAWWALI PROJECT

UPCOMING CONCERT



© SHIBIR AHMED

THIS GLORIOUS BLEND OF SUFI POETRY, INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE AND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA RETURNS TO BIRMINGHAM.

Written and directed by critically acclaimed composer Rushil Ranjan, the Orchestral Qawwali Project features the soaring vocals of Abi Sampa in effortless combination with rich orchestral arrangements performed by the CBSO. All of these elements come together to encapsulate Qawwali's original intention - to lead the listener to spiritual rapture. The Project returns to Symphony Hall with new compositions and arrangements, conductor Melvin Tay.

BOOK NOW

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B:Music Box Office on **0121 780 3333**

Thursday 27 November 2025



© PATCH DOLAN

PROUD TO BE BIRMINGHAM'S ORCHESTRA

We are Birmingham's orchestra – loud and proud. An internationally celebrated symphony orchestra that makes music that matters to the people of Birmingham, the West Midlands and beyond.

A family of incredible musicians, we exist to create exciting musical experiences for all. From brightening up the morning commute, to inspiring audiences and musicians of the future – we make epic, powerful, meaningful music that fills concert halls, communities, streets, schools and lives with passion, excitement, inspiration, hope and joy.

We've come from all over the world, but we're at home right here in Birmingham. See us at Symphony Hall playing some of the greatest symphonic music of all time, at pop-up performances around the city, at the CBSO Centre performing intimate small-scale gigs or in schools, community centres, libraries and even the occasional pub!

We're musicians, but we're also parents, teachers, runners, gardeners, writers, sports fans, foodies and so much more. We're part of your city, and we couldn't be happier to be here to play, share, write, sing, live and breathe music with you!

PERFORMERS

VIOLIN I

Jonathan Martindale*
Nathan Bomans*
Jane Wright**
Richard Thomas*
Victoria Farrell-Reed
Francisca Brito
Bethan Allmand*
Kath Gittings
Adam Hill
Robbie Bilson
Olivia Jago
Laurence Kempton
Emily Chaplais
James Pattinson

VIOLIN II

Emily Davis
Charlotte Skinner**
Amy Jones**
Izzy Howard
Bryony Morrison*
Gabriel Dyker**
Georgia Hannant*
Tim Birchall*
Tam Mott
Yuriko Matsuda
Amy Littlewood
Ricardo Brown

VIOLA

Chris Yates**
Adam Römer**
Catherine Bower**
Michael Jenkinson**
Jessica Tickle*
Sarah Malcolm*
Isobel Doncaster*
Catherine Howe
Henri Ridgdon
Isobel Adams

CELLO

Eduardo Vassallo**
Arthur Boutillier*
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Miguel Fernandes*
Helen Edgar**
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Catherine
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DOUBLE BASS

Anthony Alcock*
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Joanna Patton**
Steven Morris

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Mark O'Brien*

BASSOON

Nikolaj Henriques*
Tony Liu

CONTRABASSOON

Gareth Humphreys

HORN

Elspeeth Dutch**
Neil Shewan
Livi Gandee
Jeremy Bushell*
Alex Harris

TRUMPET

Oscar Whight
Kaitlin Wild*
Jonathan Sheppard
Daniel Mills

TROMBONE

Richard Watkin*
Anthony Howe*

BASS TROMBONE

David Vines**

TUBA

Daniel Trodden

TIMPANI

Matthew Hardy*

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We look forward to welcoming you to the family!



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We're working to better understand our audiences, and by completing a survey following a CBSO concert, you can opt in to be entered into the prize draw.



If you'd like to share any additional feedback, or have any questions, please email us at marketing@cbsoco.uk.