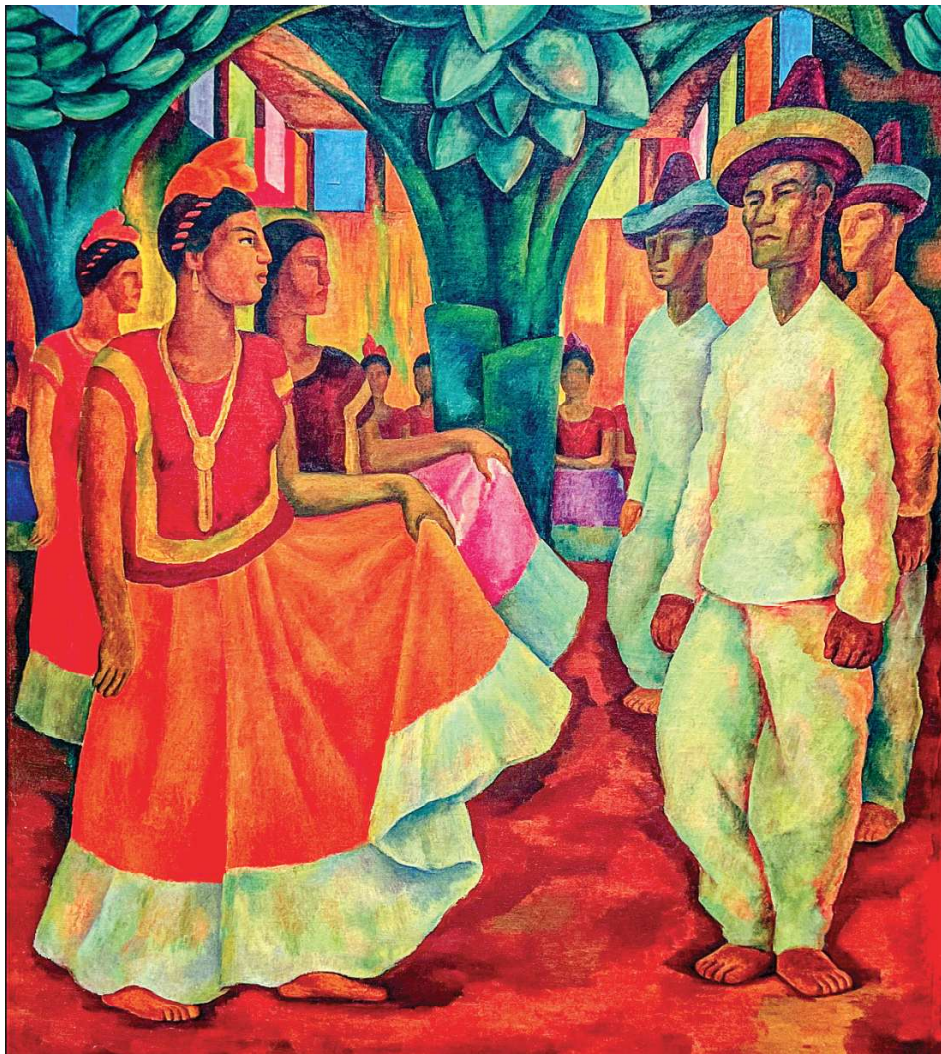


Solihull Symphony Orchestra



Invitation to the Dance
St Philip's Church Dorridge

Programme £1

15:30 Saturday 31 January 2026

Sabrina Ko



Sabrina is a Taiwanese-British conductor, violinist, and music educator based in Birmingham. Highlights of her 2025–26 season include engagements with Leamington Sinfonia, Royal Sutton Coldfield Orchestra, and Chandos Symphony Orchestra. In April 2025, she made her London debut at the Roundhouse, conducting an ensemble featuring acclaimed trumpeter Matilda Lloyd. She has also worked with soloists such as Roman Kosyakov, Charlotte Moseley, and Katy Smith.

In 2025, Sabrina was appointed Music Director of the Coventry City of Culture Orchestra and joined the National Open Youth Orchestra (NOYO) as a conductor. Since September 2025, she has led NOYO's Birmingham branch, supporting disabled and neurodivergent young musicians. These roles build on her earlier

appointment in 2021 as Music Director of the South Birmingham Sinfonia.

A dedicated advocate for music education, Sabrina works with the National Children's Orchestra and has conducted the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Junior Symphony Orchestra. Recognising the transformative power of music in young people's lives, she qualified as a music teacher in 2022 and has since taught at King Edward VI Handsworth Grammar School for Girls and Bishop Vesey's Grammar School. For the past few years, Sabrina worked part-time for Future Talent, a charity supporting young musicians from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds, and taught peripatetic violin through Birmingham's Services for Education.

Sabrina was selected for the Dartington Advanced Conducting Course in 2022, where she worked closely with Sian Edwards and Alice Farnham, and has been mentored by distinguished conductors such as Kazuki Yamada, Michael Seal, Edwin Roxburgh and Jonathan Bloxham. She studied Music at the University of Birmingham before completing her postgraduate conducting studies at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, graduating with Distinction under a scholarship award.

Programme notes - David Evans.

Cover - *Baile in Tehuantepec*, Diego Rivera (1928),
Museum of Latin American Art of Buenos Aires

Programme

Coleridge-Taylor – The Bamboula 10'

Brahms – Hungarian Dances 1, 2 and 10 9'

Marquez – Danzon No 2 10'

Piazzolla – Libertango 5'

INTERVAL

Kodaly – Dances of Galanta 18'

Dvorak – Slavonic Dances 2, 3 and 4 15'

Strauss – Die Fledermaus Overture 9'

Guest Conductor

Sabrina Ko

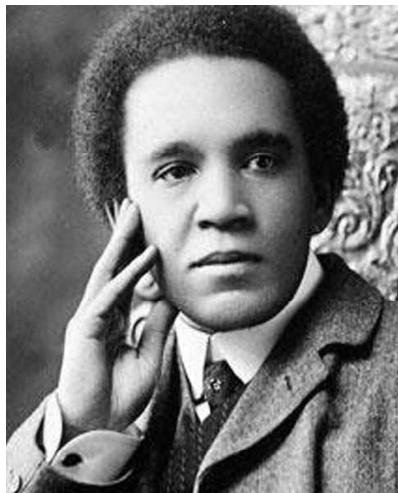
Leader

Charlotte Beresford

Please make sure that all telephones, watch alarms and other electronic devices that make noises are switched OFF or to silent. You can make short video recordings and take photographs - but please do not use flash and be careful not to disturb people nearby. And we'd love it if you could share them and tag us on social media!

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912)

The Bamboula



The Bamboula was commissioned in 1910 for an American performance, and was only completed while the composer was crossing the Atlantic. That sense of motion and anticipation is audible from the outset. A ceremonial introduction establishes weight and presence before releasing the full energy of the dance. What follows is not so much a set of decorative episodes as a tightly unified argument driven by rhythm.

Coleridge-Taylor who lived his whole life in England draws on a single Caribbean-derived phrase which is barely a tune in the conventional sense but it proves extraordinarily fertile. All three sections of the work,

fast / slow / fast, grow from this fragment. Rather than introducing new themes, the music continually reimagines the same idea: stretched, compressed, harmonised, fragmented, and re-scored with dazzling fluency.

The central slow section does not abandon the dance impulse so much as suspend it. The rhythm remains beneath the surface, allowing warmth and colour to emerge before the opening vitality reasserts itself in transformed guise. The result is a ternary structure that feels organic rather than sectional.

The orchestration is vivid and lively, extending the virtuosic streak already apparent in the composer's *Symphonic Variations*. There are echoes of Tchaikovsky, particularly in the sense of momentum and exuberance, but the voice is unmistakably personal. The overall effect is one of irrepressible invention, a celebration of rhythmic life shaped by classical discipline, and delivered with infectious panache.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Hungarian Dances Nos 1, 2 and 10

Brahms *Hungarian Dances* grew out of lived experience rather than scholarly curiosity. As a young

man, Brahms absorbed folk idioms at close quarters while touring as a pianist with the violinist Ede Reményi. What stayed with him was not individual tunes so much as a style - flexible, volatile, rhythmically charged - that seemed to defy the tidy proportions of German art music while remaining irresistibly compelling.

The music draws on the world of the *csárdás* and the *verbunkos*, dances defined by extreme contrasts. Slow, brooding openings can suddenly ignite into whirling momentum; apparent hesitation snaps into fiery propulsion. These abrupt shifts are not decorative but structural, giving the music its nervous energy and sense of barely contained motion.

Brahms always described these works as arrangements rather than original compositions, acknowledging their roots in existing melodies and performance traditions. His achievement lies in what he made of that material. Like a master craftsman, he took vivid, sometimes rough-hewn ideas and set them within a refined harmonic framework, enriching them with inner voices, rhythmic bite, and dramatic pacing that transform them for the concert hall.

The three dances heard here show different facets of that transformation. The first, dark-

hued and urgent, moves from smouldering intensity to explosive release. The second plays more slyly with rhythm and colour, its quicksilver shifts of mood lending it an almost theatrical character. The tenth, by contrast, relishes muscular drive and sharply etched accents, pushing the dance impulse close to its limits.

Originally written for piano duet and only orchestrated later, these pieces retain a physical immediacy that still feels fresh. Their appeal lies in that fusion of raw energy and formal intelligence - music that thinks while it dances.

Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

Libertango

Written in 1973, *Libertango* marks a turning point in Piazzolla's musical thinking. The title itself makes the point clearly: a fusion of 'libertad' and 'tango', signalling a conscious break from expectation. This is tango stripped of its social function and reimagined as concert music, driven by rhythm, propulsion, and formal clarity rather than dance-floor convention.

Piazzolla grew up in the sound world of Buenos Aires and began playing the bandoneón at the age of eight. By the 1940s he was already questioning the limits of traditional tango, forming his

own orchestra as a laboratory for change. That questioning met fierce resistance. His move to Paris, and his studies with Nadia Boulanger, proved decisive. She encouraged him not to dilute his voice with academic imitation but to take tango seriously as his core material. The result was ‘tango nuevo’, a language shaped as much by counterpoint, harmony, and jazz-inflected rhythm as by popular tradition.

Libertango embodies that approach in its most concentrated form. Written for his Octeto Nuevo, it adopts a lean, forward-driving texture with little ornament and no nostalgia. The music is tightly constructed, yet deliberately open in performance. Piazzolla described it as granting performers freedom defined only by their own musical capacity, not by external convention.

Its adaptability explains its afterlife. The piece has been re-scored endlessly, but its identity remains unmistakable - a statement of independence, rhythmic insistence, and control.

Arturo Márquez (1950-)

Danzón No 2

Born in Mexico, Arturo Márquez spent his early school years in California, where he first



discovered music. He came back to Mexico for a while, but then studied in Paris with Jacques Castérède, before returning to the Institute of the Arts in California.

At that time, Márquez was interested in avant garde techniques and processes, although his time at CalArts gave him ideas about how jazz and world music could be added to the mix. His first *Danzón*, composed in 1992, 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 Mexico City. The discovery of the danzón proved crucial for Márquez, renewing his own musical language in a turn away from Modernism. 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’ the composer writes. ‘From these experiences, 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 parlours of Mexico City.’

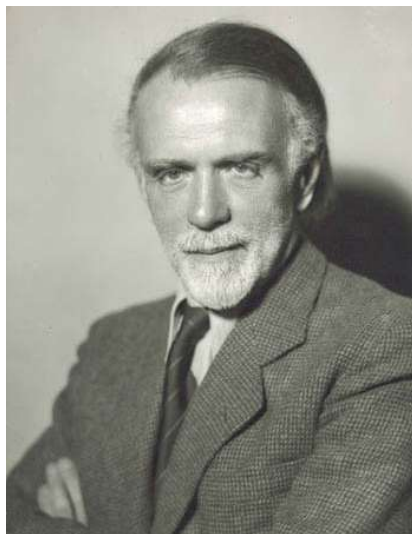
Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967)

Dances of Galánta

Composed in 1933, the *Dances of Galánta* are rooted in memory,

geography, and cultural inheritance rather than abstract experiment.

Galánta is a small Hungarian market town between Vienna and Budapest (now in Slovakia), where Kodály spent seven formative childhood years. His father was the stationmaster, and the town was a meeting place between local life and wider influences from Central Europe. What left the deepest impression on him was the sound of a celebrated Romani band led



by the fiddler Mihók, the first orchestral music he ever heard. The dances draw on melodies associated with Galánta that were published in Vienna around 1800, attributed simply to ‘several Gypsies from Galánta’. Kodály did not treat these as museum artefacts, nor did he collect them in

the field, as Bartók would later do elsewhere. Instead, he saw them as remembered voices, already filtered through history and gave them new life in a modern concert setting.

The stylistic world is that of the *verbunkos*, the recruiting dance of the 18th and 19th centuries, whose purpose was to entice young men into military service. This is music that tells stories through gesture, contrast, and atmosphere rather than through symphonic argument.

What emerges is not nostalgia but a confident act of cultural continuity. Kodály believed that Hungarian music could speak in its own language without apology, shaped by place and people rather than by imported models. In these five dances, which are played continuously, personal memory, historical record, and communal tradition converge. The result feels both local and expansive, carrying the accent of a small town yet addressing the wider world with assurance and warmth.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Slavonic Dances Nos 2, 3 and 4

As a Czech outside the mainstream of Central European musical life, Dvořák faced limited opportunities in Prague. However, he applied for government grants administered by a committee in Vienna and

won three times. One of the jury members, Johannes Brahms, connected young Dvořák with his own publisher, Fritz Simrock, who took a chance on a set of folk poetry settings that the Czech had submitted as one of his grant applications.

Hoping to repeat the success of Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*, Simrock then commissioned a fresh series of dances for the lucrative piano four-hands market. With the *Hungarian Dances* as a template, Dvořák wrote an initial set of eight *Slavonic Dances* for the keyboard in 1878, and orchestrated them at the same time.

Some years later, Simrock requested a sequel along the same lines. Dvořák however was reluctant to be seen repeating himself and responded: 'Excuse me, please, I am not in the mood for merry music like this ... It is very difficult to do the same thing twice', before eventually producing a second set also initially for piano duet.

Despite the model of Brahms's *Hungarian Dances* Dvořák took a different approach with the *Slavonic Dances*, something more comparable to what Béla Bartók would do with folk music in the following century. While Brahms simply arranged pre-existing tunes, Dvořák crafted melodies of his own. They

resemble authentic folk music so convincingly that they could easily be mistaken as transcriptions 'from the field.'

His biographer David Hurwitz points out that Dvořák refused the generic title 'Czech Dances', preferring to include representative dance forms from all over Eastern Europe. The result highlights his desire not to be limited by national labels, but to achieve success on an international scale.

Johann Strauss II (1825-1899)

Die Fledermaus Overture

First heard in Vienna in 1874, *Die Fledermaus* belongs to the golden age of operetta, when fast-moving comedy and instantly memorable tunes drew large audiences across Europe. The form had travelled from Paris to Vienna, and Austrian audiences took to it enthusiastically. For Strauss, already famous as the Waltz King, operetta offered a natural extension of what he did best - rhythm, sparkle, and an instinctive feel for theatrical timing.

The title refers to a practical joke that precedes the action. After being abandoned drunk in the street by a friend while still wearing a bat costume from a masquerade, Dr Falke becomes the object of public ridicule and plots an elaborate

revenge. The resulting chain of disguises and misunderstandings, propels a story that is deliberately absurd: a man bound for prison diverts to a party, meets his wife in disguise, and confusion unfolds in a haze of flirtation and champagne. The chiropteran itself never appears, but survives as a symbol of masked identity and comic retribution. The music mirrors this world perfectly, elegant on the surface and lightly unbuttoned underneath - a quality admired even by Brahms, who recognised the sophistication beneath its brilliance.

The overture follows the tradition of Rossini rather than classical symphonic form. It functions as a musical trailer, parading the evening's best tunes in quick succession and with effortless fluency. Sudden changes of tempo and mood are part of the point, hinting at the reversals and disguises that drive the drama.

A recurring waltz idea provides a sense of continuity amid the bustle. The swirling textures and restless energy suggest both Viennese elegance and mild intoxication.

As an opening curtain-raiser, the overture does exactly what it should: it sets the scene, establishes the tone, and invites the listener into Strauss's most irresistible theatrical world.



Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra

Elgar - Falstaff

Shostakovich - Symphony No 10

Conductor - Michael Lloyd

Sunday 8th February 15:00,
Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

Sunday 15th February 15:00,
Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
www.bpo.org.uk

Non-Playing Members

If you would like to become more involved with the orchestra, there are a variety of tasks and activities that are open to friends of the orchestra as well as to players. We'd love some extra help with refreshments at Tuesday rehearsals, and ticket sales on concert days. In return, we offer complimentary tickets for all our concerts, visits to rehearsals and other benefits! Please email if you'd like more information.

info@solihullsymphony.org.uk

Our Mailing List

If you've enjoyed this concert, why not sign up to our Supporters' Newsletter to make sure you don't miss out on future events? You'll receive advance notice of the full season's programme, and reminders about all our concerts a few weeks in advance.

www.solihullsymphony.org.uk/mailling-list



Solihull Symphony Orchestra

Patron: The Mayor of Solihull



First Violins

Charlotte Beresford

leader

Marina Battey

Lis Branson

Vivienne Brown

Peter Halldron

Elena Lemke

Jo Oswald

Will Scott

Anika Vairavaraja

Second Violins

David Roper

Charlotte McLuskie

John Bayley

Ella Begley

Stephanie Byrne

Sanjana Cherukad

Jessica Harris

Rosy Hughes

Sarah Letters

John Maxwell

Sue Walker

Susannah Watson

Violas

Kelvin Farge

Hannah Branson

Leah Broadfield

Joanna Clarke

Mark Emms

Cellos

Helen Atherton

Mike Bond

Kim Free

Alison Hart

Anne Kemp

Louise Robertson

Jeremy Thompson

Nicola Walters

Double Bass

David Evans

Oliver Bouckley

Anne Goodwin

Sue Hawthorne

Matthew Sutton

Flutes

Su Newton Ede

Mary Wright

Oboes

Sarah Vaughan

Fiona Speak

Clarinets

Victoria Rex

Jane Emms

Bassoons

Harry Jones

Simon Gates

Horns

Tim Overton

Sarah Gee

Emma McLeod

Edward Fisher

Trumpets

David Hirst

Colin Farlow

Trombones

Ian Rae

Tony Miller

Bernard Moses

Tuba

Paul Arthur

Timpani

Ken McDougall

Percussion

Stephen Plummer

Hector Yeh

Piano

Andrew Sackett



SUPPORTING &
CHAMPIONING
VOLUNTARY MUSIC

About the Orchestra

Solihull Symphony Orchestra is an diverse and friendly group that enjoys taking on the challenge of a varied repertoire with professional leadership and inspiring soloists.

We are always open to new members, especially violin, viola and double bass players. A commitment to attend rehearsals regularly, and a willingness to learn are more important than formal music qualifications. We like to perform in different venues around Solihull, and welcome invitations to play at special events.

Rehearsals are held at Shirley Methodist Church every Tuesday from 19:30 until 21:45 during school term time, with at least four concert performances each year.



Our Next Concert . . .
Saturday 25 April 2026, 15:30
Shirley Methodist Church

Northern Lights
Larsson – Pastoral Suite
Grieg – Peer Gynt Suite no 1
Sibelius – En Saga
Nielsen – Symphony no 4

Conductor - Tommaso Nista



@solihullsymphony



solihull symphony orchestra