

MEDIA RELEASE

## **LONDON SYMPHONIA KICK STARTS 2026 WITH LANDMARK CONCERT FEATURING LONDON BORN AND RAISED INTERNATIONAL STAR**



### **LARA ST. JOHN: THE ANCIENT FLAME Saturday, January 17, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.**

**LONDON, ON** – January 7, 2026 – **London Symphonia** is proud to launch its 2026 winter/spring concert season with an exciting performance by internationally acclaimed violinist Lara St. John. Born and raised in London Ontario, the performance marks both her London Symphonia debut and her first performance in London in over 10 years. Entitled **Lara St. John: The Ancient Flame**, this concert features an engrossing evening of music by three composers of Jewish descent: Aaron Copland, Avner Dorman and Felix Mendelssohn. (**Lara St. John: The Ancient Flame, Saturday, January 17, 2026 at 7:30 p.m. at Metropolitan United, London ON.**)

“2026 is off to a great start for London Symphonia with the long-awaited debut by the phenomenal violinist Lara St. John,” said **Andrew Chung, Artistic Producer, London Symphonia**. “We have been looking forward to collaborating with Lara for a number of years, and this program with Avner Dorman’s riveting Violin Concerto No. 2 “Nigunim” is a perfect opportunity for Londoners to witness her breathtaking artistry.”

The accomplished conductor **Nicolas Ellis** will also make his London Symphonia debut at the concert.

“Through his experiences in leading the innovative Orchestre de l’Agora, Les Violons du Roy, and learning alongside Yannick Nézet-Séguin as Artistic Collaborator to the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal, he brings a rich range of musical ideas and perspectives to Dorman’s Violin Concerto and the other works on the program: music from Mendelssohn’s fun and capricious *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Aaron Copland’s *Appalachian Spring Suite*, a peaceful, hopeful and optimistic piece,” Chung said.

Dorman’s Violin Concerto No. 2 is at times meditative, restless, wild, and ecstatic, digging deep into Jewish traditions around the world, distilling their captivating and unique features and commonalities. It was awarded the Azrieli Prize for Jewish Music in 2018. Lara St. John is deeply connected with the concerto. Originally written as a violin sonata, she participated in the creative development of the work. In addition to recording the concerto, she has also performed the piano quintet adaptation with the Gryphon Trio.

“I am delighted to be back home to make my London Symphonia debut,” said Lara St. John. “I am looking forward to performing Avner Dorman’s Concerto for you, for which I gave the North American and European premieres. We all appreciate your support of music in London.”

Concertgoers can choose to attend **Lara St. John: The Ancient Flame** in person at Metropolitan United, home of London Symphonia, or virtually through London Symphonia’s new **Watch and Listen** video on demand channel featuring high quality 4K HDR videos of 2025-26 concerts along with a treasure trove of past seasons.

*London Symphonia is deeply grateful to Co-Presenting Partners Serenata Music and Beverley Zaifman, and The Azrieli Foundation for their support of this concert and to our government funders: the London Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts, and the Ontario Arts Council.*

## **Upcoming London Symphonia 2026 Concerts in February and March**

### **LOVE AND ROMANCE WITH DENISE PELLEY – February 14, 2026**

This concert is an evening of musical wine and roses featuring some of the greatest romantic music ever written from pop to beloved orchestral masterworks. London’s own **Denise Pelley** sings love songs by the Bee Gees, Stevie Wonder, Tina Turner and more. Shaping this magical evening is **London Symphonia Composer/Arranger-in-Residence Scott Good**, who is creating new orchestrations and selecting classical music that will fill our hearts. Gustav Mahler’s famous Adagietto from his Fifth Symphony (originally written as a love song to his wife), and pieces by Jean Sibelius and Edvard Grieg round out the musical program. **Actor and poet Roy Lewis** will bring a set of poems written especially for Valentine’s Day that will be woven throughout the evening. Think of love in its many guises and you will find that his beautiful poetry and inimitable delivery will melt the February blues away.

## AN ENCHANTING AFTERNOON: PETER AND THE WOLF – March 8, 2026 at 3:30 pm

Here's a family concert with a real twist! Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf has long been known as a terrific introduction to the orchestra that enchants audiences, no matter what their age. We can't wait to welcome many aspiring and budding musicians to experience the story unfold on stage at Metropolitan United. Our musicians are looking forward to portraying the different characters and animals in the story, and we are delighted that the actor Deborah Hay will be joining us as Narrator. We are equally excited to present the world premiere of *The Forested City* by Algonquin-Anishinaabe storyteller and composer **Spy Dénommé-Welch** which uses music imagery to highlight and characterize the special natural environments within London. With a **pre-concert craft activity** organized by **London Children's Museum** and a post-concert **Instrument Petting Zoo** courtesy of **Long & McQuade** (Fanshawe Park Road W.) this will be a great family event. **Family Flex Packs** sponsored by **Canada Life** provide free tickets for up to 4 children as well as discounts on adult tickets.

### LISTING INFORMATION: LONDON SYMPHONIA CONCERT

*Lara St. John: The Ancient Flame*

London Symphonia

Guest Artists: Lara St. John, violin

Nicolas Ellis, conductor

Sat. January 17, 2026 at 7:30 pm

Doors open at 6:30 pm

Metropolitan United, 468 Wellington St, London, ON

### Subscriptions and Tickets on Sale Now

Ticket packages start at \$155 for 3-concert General Admission subscription and \$212 for Reserved Seating, plus fees and HST. 5-concert packages are also available. Individual adult tickets range from \$55 General Admission to \$75 Reserved Seating, plus fees and HST. Family Flex packs and free student tickets are also available. In person subscriptions and tickets can be purchased online now at **[londonsymphonia.ca](https://londonsymphonia.ca)**.

Subscriptions to all concerts, including the Family Concert, and individual concert rentals will be available on London Symphonia's **Watch and Listen video on demand channel**. Find out more at [londonsymphonia.ca](https://londonsymphonia.ca).

### ABOUT LARA ST. JOHN

After performing for decades around the globe as a "high-powered soloist" (The New York Times), Canadian-born violinist Lara St. John has chosen to dispense with a conventional biography, preferring instead to offer the following personal statement:

"I began playing the violin when I was two years old and have continued to do so ever since. But even though my career has had many high points and offered real artistic satisfaction, I cannot honestly say I would do it all over again. It has required horrific

sacrifices – including my experiences with child sexual abuse and being treated as little more than a commodity by a long list of presenters, administrators and so-called educators.

“Rampant misogyny continues to be depressingly commonplace in the world of classical music, incredibly, even as we fumble our way toward the middle of the 21st century. This has drained away a lot of the sheer joy of making music for me.

“At the same time, I have made some wonderful friends in this business. I will always have faith in them and in the profound power of music to inspire and to heal. I will never stop being amazed by the possibility within a simple instrument like the violin. But my desire to use it as a tool for making a living has fallen off to almost nothing.”

Lara has performed as a soloist with most of the world’s major orchestras. She also owns her own recording label, Ancalagon, which she founded in 1999. In 2022, she released *she/her/hers*, her label’s 16th album, featuring solo violin works by women. After going public with her own experience of being raped by her professor at the Curtis Institute of Music when she was 14 years old, Lara heard from many other survivors of abuse at the hands of music teachers, conductors and colleagues, with the complicity of their respective institutions. She is now in the process of making *Dear Lara*, a documentary film on this subject.

In 2021 Lara was invested with the Order of Canada. She is a knight of Burgundy and a reptile enthusiast. She owns and performs on a 1779 Guadagnini, a 2011 David Wiebe and a 2024 Isabelle Wilboux.

## **ABOUT NICOLAS ELLIS**

Nicolas Ellis is the Music Director of the Orchestre National de Bretagne, Principal Guest Conductor of Les Violons du Roy, as well as Artistic Director and Conductor of the Orchestre de l’Agora, which he founded in Montreal in 2013.

One of the most active conductors on the Canadian scene, Nicolas is increasingly sought after as a guest conductor by many orchestras across Europe and North America. In the 2025–2026 season, he will make his debut with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra and the Norwegian Radio Orchestra. He will conduct Shostakovich’s First Symphony with the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra, as well as works by Johanna Müller-Hermann and Sofia Goubaïdouline with the Orchestre de l’Opéra national de Nancy-Lorraine. He will also lead Poulenc’s *Les Animaux modèles* with the Polish Radio Orchestra, and Handel’s *Messiah* with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. He will return to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, where he will conduct a symphony by Justin Williams, who is also the orchestra’s Assistant Principal Viola. In Canada, he will conduct *Trois femmes de légendes* by Mélanie Bonis with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, and Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony with the Victoria Symphony.

Nicolas Ellis is the recipient of the Fernand Lindsay Career Grant (2017) and was awarded the Mécénat Musica Prix Goyer (2021).



## ABOUT LONDON SYMPHONIA

London Symphonia is a professional symphony orchestra committed to performing vibrant and bold musical experiences for London and the region. With a core of 30 players, our versatile group meets the community's needs for quality programming by presenting well-known symphonies, Canadian premieres, and collaborations with some of Canada's finest singer-songwriters. We deliver a rich, artistic experience by seeking out the most accomplished performers and conductors representing a blend of locally, nationally and internationally recognized talent. A registered charitable organization, London Symphonia conducts dynamic music education programs and community outreach programs to provide greater access to music across the community.

Website: [\*\*londonsymphonia.ca\*\*](http://londonsymphonia.ca)

Social media: Join the conversation on Facebook | Instagram | YouTube | BlueSky

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