

Kate Molleson: Hello and welcome to the Edinburgh International Festival 2025. I'm Kate Molleson, and this is The Warm Up, an insider's guide to the performance that you're about to experience.

Now we take a look at the London Symphony Orchestra Residency at the Usher Hall. Before we hear from the conductor, Sir Antonio Pappano, here is our festival director, Nicola Benedetti, to tell us more about it.

Nicola Benedetti: So we are so excited to have the London Symphony Orchestra back again. What is particularly exciting about this year is that they will be coming for the first time with their new music director, Sir Antonio Pappano.

Their residency this year begins with, what I would say is kind of the blockbuster concert of Beethoven's Fifth and Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony. Two incredible works that both Tony and I will actually be talking about from the stage. So this performance is, if you've not been to a classical music performance before, I would say, come to this one and you will not be disappointed.

One concert I cannot wait for this summer is Vaughn Williams' *A Sea Symphony*. It's Vaughn Williams' first and one of his longest works but his ability to bring this stirring emotion to subjects of the natural world, subjects that are otherwise quite sort of tangible and I guess have a practical element to them. I think there's no composer that does this quite like Vaughn Williams. We associate it quite a lot with Britain, and I would venture to say that therefore it's quite a British skill, to be able to take the natural world around us and bring the incredible depth of emotion that only music can offer to these subject matters. It's gonna be monumental. I'll be there and I can't wait.

To round off this incredible residency, Pappano will be sharing his love of Puccini and one of Puccini's most heartfelt and heartbreaking operas, *Suor Angelica*. It'll be performed in concert as a hallmark of our Festival, our operas in concert.

The opera follows the story of Sister Angelica, whose search for peace is troubled by her past. For our Edinburgh Festival Chorus to have the opportunity to work with Tony Pappano on his hallmark home territory repertoire is gonna be an experience they will take with them for the rest of their lives and will create something for our audiences that is gonna be so entirely unique.

Antonio Pappano: Hi, my name is Antonio Pappano. Although some people feel that, *Suor Angelica*, it has a certain sentimentality, I don't believe that at all. I find the opera has a unique atmosphere and I was drawn in completely from that moment. And then I've gone on to conduct the piece quite often, but always in the theatre, never in a concert performance.

It's the central part of an evening of three one-act operas. Very, very special, and it has this incredible confrontation scene between Suor Angelica and her aunt, the Principessa and the

fireworks between these two. I mean, it's operatic heaven, but it's very moving at the same time.

The theme of this year's Edinburgh International Festival is The Truth We Seek. As a musician and especially as a conductor, because I'm not playing the music as such, I'm kind of digging with my mind, my study, and my people skills to try to get everybody to make the music jump off the page and the music has to speak honestly, with conviction and with fervour. I believe that that is a form of truth. You can't hide behind the veneer of the perceived glamor of being on stage. You're completely naked. You're open. You have to deliver something that is true.

The LSO sound is the product of years and years and years of history. Its members being chosen not only for their musical ability, but also for their inherent personality. What is it that they have that is special?

That's how the choices are made for the musicians who enter into this orchestra. Imagine having these people in front of you and it's like a goldmine and you just have to keep digging and asking and demanding. And what they produce is something that is, I believe, incredibly exciting, full of temperament, full of nerve, and so ambitious, and that you hear in the sound. And I think that gives them the energy to produce this virtuosity, which is kind of a calling card for them.

In Vaughn Williams' *A Sea Symphony*, his symphony number one, there's an overwhelming sense of ebullience. Trying to capture the nature of the sea, its tempestuous, its majesty, its danger, and the people have sailed upon the sea and the majestic character of those individuals, the bravery.

So it's a very human work. And the fact that it's scored for big orchestra, two soloists, a soprano and a baritone, but the all-important chorus, there's a tremendous sense of community. So I think when you're listening to this piece, take that all in. Just take it as it comes. Its bigness, its darkness, its joy. Its tragedies.

Kate Molleson: Conductor Sir Antonio Pappano and Nicola Benedetti there with some more insight into the LSO's residency this year. On Tuesday the 12th of August, Nicola Benedetti and Sir Antonio Pappano present two show stopping symphonies: Beethoven's Fifth and Shostakovich's Tenth. And then on Thursday the 14th of August, it's *A Sea Symphony* by Vaughn Williams, the LSO joined by the Edinburgh Festival Chorus.

And finally, on Saturday the 16th of August, Antonio Pappano shares his love for Puccini's heartfelt opera *Suor Angelica* joined once again by the Edinburgh Festival Chorus. The London Symphony Orchestra Residency is supported by the Edinburgh International Festival Endowment Fund.