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barbican

Fragile Earth – major new environmental concert series launches at the Barbican this autumn



Julia Wolfe's *unEarth* receives its UK premiere with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and conductor Martyn Brabbins, BBC Singers, National Youth Choir and Danish soprano Else Torp. c. Chris Lee

Today, the Barbican expands its programme for a forthcoming major new concert series: [**Fragile Earth: Sounds of a Living Planet**](#) - adding three new performances from classical and contemporary artists and activists to its season-long musical exploration of our relationship with the natural world.

Fragile Earth invites audiences to tune into planet Earth: an inexhaustible source of inspiration and joy for artists engaged in celebrating nature as well as addressing the burning challenges of our time. Newly-announced today, **Hand to Earth & Shabaka** bring together diverse musical traditions from across the globe, musician and zoologist **Louis VI** transforms the Barbican Conservatory into an ecological soundscape, and soprano **Renée Fleming** presents *Voice of Nature* – part-song cycle, part-call to action.

These performances join the likes of composer **Anna Meredith** disrupting Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* with spangling electronics in *ANNO*, and Samoan director **Lemi Ponifasio** counterpointing Mahler's *Song of the Earth* with the existential sea-chorus of the **Theatre of Kiribati**. Also in the series, real birdsong weaves through Rautavaara's *Cantus Arcticus* and

Cassandra Miller's *Warbleworks*, while music intermingles with field recordings as composers from across the world come together with **The Hermes Experiment** for an immersive day in the Conservatory. Audiences can travel through Orford Ness's sonic archaeology in **Hayden Thorpe** and **Robert Macfarlane's** *Song of Ness* and dive into the subaqueous world of John Luther Adams's *Become Ocean* with the **BBC Symphony Orchestra**. The series will also include a concerto for recycled percussion, a Medieval floral meditation, and Judith Weir's *The Welcome Arrival of Rain*. In a series centrepiece, **Julia Wolfe's** major new oratorio *unEarth* receives its UK premiere, gathering young voices to generate spiritual hope for the future.

Helen Wallace, Barbican Head of Music says: "*Some of the most imaginative music today is being created by artists engaging with a fast-eroding natural world. We are delighted to provide a platform for such a range of projects, from Louis VI's Dominican rainforest to Lemi Ponifasio's Samoan choruses to Julia Wolfe's blazing call to action, unEarth. The Barbican, with its Hall and Conservatory, provides ideal spaces to encounter these captivating creations.*"

Fragile Earth is also part of a broader cross-arts focus at the Barbican this autumn, with further adjacent events taking place in Cinema, Theatre & Dance, Visual Arts and Talks.

New concerts announced today, with more information below:

- **Hand to Earth & Shabaka** ([Fri 12 Sep 2025, St Giles Cripplegate, 7.30pm](#))
- **Louis VI Presents NATURE AIN'T A LUXURY** ([Sat 25 + Sun 26 Oct 2025, Conservatory, 12-7pm](#))
- **Renée Fleming - Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene** ([Sat 6 Dec 2025, Barbican Hall, 7.30pm](#))

Previously announced concerts, with more information below:

- **Anna Meredith and Scottish Ensemble: ANNO** ([Thu 25 Sep 2025, Barbican Hall, 7.30pm](#))
- **BBCSO: John Luther Adams's *Become Ocean*** ([Wed 8 Oct 2025, Barbican Hall, 7.30pm](#))
- **Gabriela Montero with the Calidore Quartet: Canaima** ([Tue 11 Nov 2025, Milton Court, 7.30pm](#))
- **Hayden Thorpe & Robert Macfarlane: *Song of Ness*** ([Thu 16 Oct 2025, Milton Court, 7.30pm](#))
- **Ligeti Quartet: *Sunrise Missions*** ([Thu 27 Nov 2025, Milton Court, 7.30pm](#))
- **The Hermes Experiment: *Let Us Be a Mighty River*** ([Sun 7 Dec 2025, Barbican Conservatory, all day](#))
- **The Marian Consort: *The Language of Flowers*** ([Sun 7 Dec 2025, Milton Court, 7.30pm](#))
- **Julia Wolfe: *unEarth* with BBC SO UK PREMIERE** ([Fri 23 Jan 2026, Barbican Hall, 7.30pm](#))
- **Britten Sinfonia/Stevens & Pound: *Earth and other planets* with Robert Macfarlane** ([Wed 28 Jan 2026, Barbican Hall, 7.30pm](#))
- **Lemi Ponifasio and Theatre of Kiribati: *Sea Beneath The Skin/Song of the Earth*** ([Mon 2 Feb 2026, Barbican Hall, 7.30pm](#))
- **Britten Sinfonia: *Recycling Concerto*** ([Thu 12 Mar 2026, Barbican Hall, 7.30pm](#))

- **BBC SO/Oramo: Stravinsky's Firebird** ([Fri 13 Mar 2026, Barbican Hall, 7.30pm](#))

More information about each of the concerts and press contacts are available below.

For press images relating to the concert series, please click [here](#).

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***Fragile Earth* concerts newly-announced today:**

Hand to Earth & Shabaka

Friday 12 September 2025, 7:30pm

St Giles Cripplegate

Tickets from £20 plus booking fee

Marking the world premiere of a new collaboration between British musician **Shabaka** and the Australian ensemble **Hand to Earth**, this work brings together diverse musical traditions from across continents in the medieval church of St Giles Cripplegate, across the Barbican Lakeside.

Hand to Earth features **Daniel Wilfred**, a Wāgilak songman and custodian of the oldest continuously practised music tradition in the world. He is joined by Korean vocalist **Sunny Kim**, whose improvised gestures draw on elemental and spiritual forces; his brother **David Wilfred** on didgeridoo; trumpeter and electronics artist **Peter Knight**; and multi-instrumentalist **Aviva Endean**, who performs on clarinet and harmonic flute.

The concert will also celebrate the release of *Durru Wāṇa* (ROOM40), Hand to Earth's latest recording. The work traces the path of Djuwalpada, a figure from Wāgilak dreaming, through music that evokes connection to land, place, and ancestry. The song cycle refers to birds, seasons, and natural elements such as the Gaḍayka (Stringybark tree), which provides both material and meaning in Wāgilak culture.

Shabaka joins the ensemble in a meeting of musical languages shaped by Afro-Caribbean diasporic traditions, jazz, and ritual music from around the world. His use of various flutes — including the shakuhachi, Mayan drone flutes, and Brazilian pifanos — intersects with Hand to Earth's evolving sound and opening space for shared forms of improvisation and listening.

Produced by the Barbican

[Find out more](#)

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Louis VI Presents... NATURE AIN'T A LUXURY

an experience of listening

Saturday 25 & Sunday 26 October 2025

Barbican Conservatory

Playback sessions: Pay what you can / Performance sessions: £15

Musician, sound artist and zoologist, **Louis J. Butler** aka **Louis VI**, has recorded some of the most biodiverse ecosystems left on our planet to present in the Barbican Conservatory, in one of the most biodiversity-depleted cities on Earth. Both sound installation and exhibition, ***NATURE AIN'T A LUXURY*** is designed to reset our connection to the natural world through sound and to show audiences that these sounds are our legacy and culture as humans.

Growing up in north London, British-Dominican-French artist Louis J. Butler realised, during a dawn chorus, that city-dwellers weren't hearing the sounds they were supposed to and sought to understand and demonstrate the effects of that absence of sound. Travelling to three key international sites: **Sarayaku, Kichwa nation** in the Ecuadorian Amazon (as it is today known), **Raja Ampat** in West Papua, and **Waitukubuli**, also known as Dominica, in the Caribbean, Louis recorded hours of high-fidelity 3D audio across morning and afternoon/evening sessions. Using omnidirectional microphones modelled on human hearing, he captured the shifting textures of these environments at their most sonically alive and now brings them to the Barbican Conservatory.

The acoustic landscapes recorded will transport listeners to these three locations as they move freely through the Conservatory's dense foliage, with the sounds relayed through wireless headphones. Visitors are encouraged to explore, to listen and to imagine a future world where this symphony of nature again becomes commonplace. Each visit offers a unique listening experience shaped by the time of day and route taken through the space — resetting expectations of what a healthy environment sounds like and drawing attention to the loss of natural sound in everyday urban life.

The weekend also includes two special live performances from Louis VI and his band using the field recordings he's captured in the music, which, in collaboration with SoundsRight — a project from Brian Eno's charity EarthPercent, formally credits NATURE itself as an artist.

Produced by the Barbican

[Find out more](#)

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Renee Fleming in Recital

Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene

Saturday 6 December 2025, 7.30pm

Barbican Hall

Tickets from £20 plus booking fee

One of the most celebrated singers of our time, **Renée Fleming** brings her Grammy-award-winning 2023 project *Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene*, part-song recital, part-call to action, to

the Barbican's stage, joined by pianist **Howard Watkins**. The performance features an original film produced together with the National Geographic Society.

Voice of Nature: the Anthropocene, created with conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin, was inspired, initially, by reflections on a scene from Richard Fleischer's 1973 dystopian sci-fi thriller *Soylent Green*, seen by Fleming aged 14. This particular scene sees a dying researcher shown footage of a living, breathing, thriving Earth to ease his passing – a distant memory in the film's world. The images of flowers and savannahs, flocks and herds, unpolluted skies and waters, are set to a soundtrack of classical music. Fast forward to the pandemic, with performances halted, and Fleming at home, finding solace in nature, with long walks outdoors to maintain emotional equilibrium. At the same time, she was witnessing almost daily news reports of species extinction, fire and flooding, among other impacts of climate change. It was in this unique period that *Voice of Nature: the Anthropocene* project was born. Thinking of the great legacy of song literature that she loved - when Romantic-era poets and composers revelled in imagery of nature, Fleming was moved to record some of them, and to juxtapose them with the voices of living composers addressing our current, troubled relationship with the natural world.

Following the success of the album *Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene* (Decca, 2023), a film was created together with the National Geographic Society, which audiences will see in this performance. Speaking about the film, and on the wider project, Fleming says "*Thankfully, the stunning natural world depicted in this film still exists, unlike that movie scene so upsetting to my younger self. In blending these beautiful images with music, my hope is, in some small way, to rekindle our appreciation of nature, and encourage any efforts we can make to protect the planet we share.*"

Produced by the Barbican

[Find out more](#)

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***Fragile Earth* concerts previously announced as part of the [Barbican classical season 2025/26](#):**

- **Anna Meredith and Scottish Ensemble - *Anno***: Composer **Anna Meredith** presents *Anno*, a sensory experience of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, disrupting Vivaldi's bucolic evocations with dazzling electronics. Performed by **Scottish Ensemble**, the concert will also feature dynamic and beautiful projections created by visual artist **Eleanor Meredith**. Audiences will experience a year in an hour, as musicians and projects create a cycle of sound and light that merges, collides and cocoons. ([25 Sep 2025](#))
- **BBCSO: John Luther Adams's *Become Ocean***: Principal Guest Conductor **Dalia Stasevska** conducts one of the defining and Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpieces of the 21st century: John Luther Adams' *Become Ocean*. The luminous expanse of music with a timely, troubling and yet hopeful message about our relationship with the natural world

will be performed by the Barbican's Associate Orchestra: the **BBC Symphony Orchestra**. ([8 Oct 2025](#))

- **Gabriela Montero with the Calidore Quartet: *Canaima***: Celebrated Venezuelan pianist and composer Gabriela Montero is joined by the New York-based string quartet Calidore Quartet as part of her Barbican artist residency in a programme of chamber music including, *Canaima*, a vivid new work by Montero inspired by the majestic landscapes and ecological fragility of Venezuela's Canaima National Park. ([11 Nov 2025](#))
- **Hayden Thorpe & Robert Macfarlane: *Song of Ness***: Singer-songwriter and former Wild Beasts frontman **Hayden Thorpe** makes his Barbican headline debut bringing the poignant words and melodies from his latest album **Ness**. Inspired by the eerie fable of best-selling place author **Robert Macfarlane** and artist **Stanley Donwood's** book of the same title, the album reimagines the atmospheric landscapes of Suffolk nature reserve Orford Ness and is brought to life with Thorpe performing alongside Macfarlane and **Propellor Ensemble** as well as an ensemble of Musicians from the next-door **Guildhall School of Music & Drama**. ([16 Oct 2025](#))
- **Ligeti Quartet: *Sunrise Missions***: **Ligeti Quartet** traces the shifting contours of memory, nature, and change in a programme including a Barbican co-commission with the SHM Foundation and **world premiere** by London-based composer **Blasio Kavuma**, whose work explores the intersection of Western classical and Afro-diasporic music. The programme will also feature Kaija Saariaho's *Terra Memoria*, Cassandra Miller's *Warbleworks 1-4*, Wadada Leo Smith's String Quartet No 5, and conclude with John Luther Adams' *The Wind in High Places*. Blasio Kavuma's commission, part of *LIMINAL*, is generously supported by the SHM Foundation. ([27 Nov 2025](#))
- **The Hermes Experiment: *Let Us Be a Mighty River***: Taking over the Barbican's verdant Conservatory, **The Hermes Experiment** collaborate with five international sound artists for an immersive concert-installation responding to the climate emergency. The day will showcase sonic essays by Monthati Masebe (South Africa), Kathy Hinde (UK), Sandeep Bhagwati (India/Germany), Bint Mbareh (Palestine), and Martha Hincapié Charry (Colombia), each giving a unique perspective on climate change. Symbolised as 'islands,' these perspectives are connected into a unified call for action - the 'mighty river.' ([7 Dec 2025](#))
- **The Marian Consort: *The Language of Flowers***: Acclaimed choral ensemble **The Marian Consort** pays tribute to flowers and gardens - both actual and allegorical - with music from the late Renaissance to the present day. The performance will also include new commissions by composers Amy Bryce and Leo Chadburn ([7 Dec 2025](#))
- **Julia Wolfe: *unEarth***: A major new co-production of Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer Julia Wolfe's new work receives its **UK premiere** at the Barbican. Performed by the **BBC Symphony Orchestra** and conductor **Martyn Brabbins**, **BBC Singers**, **National Youth Choir** and Danish soprano **Else Torp**, *unEarth* is a large-scale oratorio combining ancient languages, poetry and protest in a moving and urgent plea to engage in the climate emergency. Directed by **Anne Kauffman**, the project is a co-production between the Barbican, BBC SO and Bang on a Can productions. ([23 Jan 2026](#))

- **Britten Sinfonia/Stevens & Pound: Earth and other planets with Robert Macfarlane:** Britten Sinfonia and folk duo Stevens & Pound present a re-imagining of Holst's *The Planets* in *The Silent Planet* (Mars, Venus, Jupiter, Mercury and, lastly, Earth) – interspersed with text written and narrated by nature and place writer **Robert Macfarlane**. The concert will also include three works evoking different earthly places and landscapes by Ravel, Britten and Grainger. ([28 Jan 2026](#))
- **Sea Beneath The Skin/Song of the Earth:** Reflecting upon the words of the late Kiribati poet and activist Teresia Teaiwa, Lemi Ponifasio's *Sea Beneath The Skin* creates a ceremonial performance with the **Theatre of Kiribati** and **Britten Sinfonia** - at a time when the Theatre of Kiribati performers' homeland, Kiribati, is experiencing the devastating and overwhelming impacts of climate change. Joined by mezzo-soprano **Fleur Barron**, the project invokes the life of our collective body and our communion with the world beyond humanity, juxtaposing and intertwining Pacific traditional rituals with Gustav Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* in an emotional human outcry. ([2 Feb 2026](#))
- **Britten Sinfonia: Recycling Concerto:** Nature and conservation are at the heart of this uplifting programme of orchestral works. Across the evening **Britten Sinfonia** will perform Beethoven's beloved 'Pastoral' Symphony No 6, 20th century Finnish composer Rautavaara's *Cantus Arcticus* – a concerto for birds and orchestra featuring field recordings of curlews, shore larks and whooper swans, and Mayrhofer's concerto of repurposed rubbish: the Recycling Concerto. ([12 Mar 2026](#))
- **BBC SO/Oramo: Stravinsky's Firebird:** A programme that bursts with all of the life and colour of the natural world - from the birdsong evoked in Bartok's Piano Concerto No 3 to Gerald Finzi's pastoral *Eclogue* and Judith Weir's *The Welcome Arrival of Rain* with the **BBC Symphony Orchestra** and Chief Conductor **Sakari Oramo**. Korean pianist **Yeol Eum Son** will perform Bartok's Piano Concerto No 3 before the performance culminates with the folklore, fairytales and magic of Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite* (1945). ([13 Mar 2026](#))

ENDS

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Barbican press room

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About the Barbican

The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity, sparking possibilities for artists, audiences, and communities. We showcase the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional artistic boundaries to entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

We are an international arts and events centre rooted firmly in our own neighbourhood, collaborating with local communities and putting the City of London on the map as a destination for everybody. Central to our purpose is supporting emerging talent and shaping opportunities that will accelerate the next generation of creatives.

As a not-for-profit, we rely on the generosity of individuals and organisations, including our principal funder the City of London Corporation. Every ticket purchased, donation made, and pound earned supports our arts and learning programme and enables the widest possible range of people to experience the joy of the arts.

Opened in 1982, the Barbican is a unique and audacious building, recognised globally as an architectural icon. As well as our theatres, galleries, concert halls and cinemas, we have a large conservatory with over 1,500 species of plants and trees, a library, conference facilities, public and community spaces, restaurants, bars, and a picturesque lakeside oasis.

We're proud to be the home of the [London Symphony Orchestra](#), our Resident Orchestra, and a London base for the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#). We regularly co-commission, produce and showcase the work of our Artistic Associates the [Academy of Ancient Music](#), [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#), [Boy Blue](#), [Darbar Arts](#), [Cultural and Heritage Trust](#), and Serious, and our other associates and partners including [Doc'n Roll Film Festival](#), [EFG London Jazz Festival](#), [London Palestine Film Festival](#), and [Trafalgar Theatre Productions](#).

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