



KATE ATKINSON AND THE BBC SO: NORMAL RULES DON'T APPLY

Friday 26 April 2024

The BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican

Be transported to a world where music tells powerful stories, and no emotion is off limits.

CONCERTS APRIL – MAY

FRIDAY 19 APRIL 7.30pm

CAMILLE PÉPIN *Les eaux célestes*
UK premiere

FRANCIS POULENC *Gloria*

HECTOR BERLIOZ *Symphonie fantastique*

Jader Bignamini *conductor*
Elizabeth Watts *soprano*
BBC Symphony Chorus

FRIDAY 26 APRIL 7.30pm

KATE ATKINSON
AND THE BBC SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA: NORMAL RULES
DON'T APPLY

Author Kate Atkinson joins the BBC SO for an evening of words and music.

SUNDAY 5 MAY

TOTAL IMMERSION:
ITALIAN RADICALS

A day of immersion in the music of four composers who redefined a nation: Luciano Berio, Luigi Dallapiccola, Bruno Maderna and Luigi Nono.

FRIDAY 10 MAY 7.30pm

JOSÉ MAURÍCIO NUNES GARCIA
Missa de Santa Cecília

MODEST MUSSORGSKY
Pictures at an Exhibition
(orch. Ravel)

April Koyejo-Audiger *soprano*
Marta Fontanals-Simmons
mezzo-soprano
Joshua Stewart *tenor*
Ross Ramgobin *baritone*
BBC Symphony Chorus
Martyn Brabbins *conductor*

FRIDAY 17 MAY 7.30pm

SOFIA GUBAIDULINA
The Wrath of God *UK premiere*

SERGEY RACHMANINOV
Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
Symphony No. 4 in F minor

Lise de la Salle *piano*
Anna Rakitina *conductor*

FRIDAY 24 MAY 7.30pm

OLIVER KNUSSEN
Cleveland Pictures

BENJAMIN BRITTEN *Double Concerto for Violin and Viola*

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
A Sea Symphony (Symphony No. 1)

Silja Aalto *soprano*
Morgan Pearse *baritone*
Vilde Frang *violin*
Lawrence Power *viola*
BBC Symphony Chorus
Sakari Oramo *conductor*

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FRIDAY 26 APRIL, 2024

7.30pm, BARBICAN HALL

LEEVI MADETOJA A Comedy Overture 8'

Introduction and reading from 'Behind the Scenes at the Museum' (1995)

ERMANNIO WOLF-FERRARI Il segreto di Susanna – overture 3'

Reading from 'A God in Ruins' (2015)

GEORGE GERSHWIN, ARR. SIMON NATHAN Oh, Kay! – 'Someone to Watch Over Me – 4'

Reading from 'Life after Life' (2013)

COLERIDGE-TAYLOR PERKINSON Sinfonietta No. 1 – Song Form (Largo) 5'

Reading from 'Transcription' (2018)

CHARLES WILLIAMS Devil's Galop 3'

INTERVAL: 20 MINUTES

ANNA CLYNE Fractured Time 6'

Reading: The Void from 'Normal Rules Don't Apply' (2023)

JOSEPH HAYDN The Creation – Representation of Chaos 7'

Reading from 'Shrines of Gaiety' (2022)

THOMAS ADÈS Hotel Suite from 'Powder Her Face' – overture 5'

Reading from 'Started Early, Took My Dog' (2010)

GEORGE GERSHWIN Shall We Dance – 'Walking the Dog' (Promenade) 3'

Kate Atkinson author/reader • **Jamie Parker** vocalist • **Adam Hickox** conductor

Creative Consultants: Paul Hughes (music) and Steve Doherty (spoken word), for Giddy Goat Productions

Please note that the readings in tonight's performance include themes of an adult nature and some scenes that may be considered distressing.

RADIO **3** **4** **SOUNDS**

This concert is being recorded for broadcast by BBC Radio 3 later this year and by Radio 4 in January next year. It will be available for 30 days after broadcast via BBC Sounds, where you can also find podcasts and music mixes.

Please ensure all mobile phones and watch-alarms are switched off.

Words and Music

I know only words, not music. I have never learnt an instrument, although I fervently wish I had, and you would never want to hear me sing, not even 'Happy Birthday'. I am in absolute awe of both musicians and composers and so it goes without saying that, when Paul Hughes and Steve Doherty from Giddy Goat Productions asked me if I would like to be part of a concert with the brilliant BBC Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of conductor Adam Hickox, I was truly delighted – flattered, even.

This evening's programme was devised by Paul and Steve. I think it makes for an exciting and surprising evening – for me, anyway, and I hope for you as well.

My personal tastes in music tend to veer towards the popularist and the sentimental so, if it had been up to me, we might have found ourselves listening to a decidedly unchallenging evening. Although, in my defence, 'sentimental' is a word that's been debased over the years. I prefer its original meaning, which is more closely allied to sensibility. It is our sensibilities, our senses, that are addressed by both music and words, indeed by all art.

There was always classical music in the background when I was a child, and my musical preferences were certainly shaped by my father's tastes for the Romantic (and romantic). His record collection did not stray much beyond a roll call of the

greats – Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert, Tchaikovsky. And the wonderful contralto Kathleen Ferrier, of course – a particular love of my father's on account of her being both Northern and having died tragically young. Her album *Songs of the British Isles* was at the heart of my 2015 novel *A God in Ruins*. I always have a piece of music that provides a touchstone of emotion when I'm writing, something that I can refer to when I start to drift (which happens often). In *Transcription* (2018) it was the 1942 London concert premiere of Shostakovich's Seventh ('A collective swelling of the heart!') In *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* (1995) it was Helen Shapiro singing 'Walking Back to Happiness' – embedded so deep as to be completely invisible to the reader.

My father had a very unfortunate childhood and I have no idea where his love of the classics sprang from, but it must have provided a nourishing antidote to his early life working at the Bentley Colliery, near Doncaster. The first time he went to a classical concert, he told me, he 'clapped like billy-o' after the first movement and was appalled by what he saw as ungrateful silence on the part of the audience. He was always singing little snatches – the drinking song from Verdi's *La traviata*, the Vilja Song from Lehár's *The Merry Widow*, almost anything from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. It cheered him enormously. Even at the end, when he was blind and had lost his long-term memory, he could still be found crouched over his little Roberts transistor, listening to Radio 3.

My mother – due a look in here, I think – had tastes that never ranged beyond Welsh male voice choirs (nothing wrong with that, I’m partial myself to a bit of ‘Myfanwy’). She once told me that she had been ‘forced’ to listen to Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto so many times while pregnant with me that she found herself humming along to it when she was in labour (a feat in itself). I’m sure I was listening. I’m still listening.

Introduction © Kate Atkinson

Tonight’s Music

LEEVI MADETOJA (1887–1947) **A Comedy Overture, Op. 53 (1923)**

During his lifetime Leevi Madetoja became one of the most celebrated of all Finnish composers, but he has since been overshadowed by Sibelius, with whom he studied between 1908 and 1910. What success Madetoja did enjoy was hard won, and the contrast between much of his life and the sunny nature of his *Comedy Overture* is dramatic. Madetoja grew up in poverty, working as a street cleaner and in a sawmill. He played the mouth organ, violin and piano, and became skilled at playing the kantele, a traditional Finnish stringed instrument.

Madetoja studied music in Helsinki and travelled to Paris, where he soaked up the styles burgeoning there; conducting success followed back in Helsinki, but the

First World War put him out of a job and he had to pawn his metronome to make ends meet. The war gave way to civil war between Finland’s nationalist White Guards and socialist Red Guards, resulting in the death of Madetoja’s brother. He lamented: ‘Oh, when will we see the day when the forces of hatred vanish from the world and the good spirits of peace can return to heal the wounds inflicted by suffering and misery?’

Such sorrow seems worlds away from *A Comedy Overture* written a few years later, by which time Madetoja was enjoying considerable success. He showed a particular affinity with opera; this colourful, witty overture was intended for the abortive opera *Nummisuutarit* (‘Heath Cobblers’).

ERMANNO WOLF-FERRARI (1876–1948)

Il segreto di Susanna (1909) – overture

Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari was born in Venice to a German father, painter August Wolf, and Italian mother Emilia Ferrari, whose maiden name he added to his surname in 1895. For some time it looked as though Wolf-Ferrari would follow in his father’s footsteps: he showed a great aptitude for painting. He studied art in Rome and Venice before travelling to Munich, where some casual composition lessons ignited his passion for music.

Wolf-Ferrari returned to Italy and began composing in earnest, but his music was

not a great success there and he went back to Germany, where audiences proved more appreciative. His heritage, with its mixture of Germanic and Italian cultures, led to a remarkably varied output, ranging from music in the Austro-German Romantic tradition to 18th-century pastiche to swathes of rich chromaticism.

Wolf-Ferrari's greatest strength was for comic opera, for which he showed real flair in works of comedic and musical brilliance. Of these, the one-act opera *Il segreto di Susanna* ('Susanna's Secret') has been the most enduringly popular. A man suspects his wife of having an affair on detecting the scent of cigarette smoke on her clothes – but it turns out that she is simply a secret smoker. The overture sets the scene with its bustling textures and playful atmosphere.

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898–1937)
Oh, Kay! (1926) – 'Someone to Watch Over Me'

The jazz-era musical *Oh, Kay!* was a collaboration between George and Ira Gershwin and P. G. Wodehouse, who wrote the libretto alongside Guy Bolton. If this sounds like an embarrassment of riches, it almost was, with previews running to over three hours. Eight of the Gershwins' songs were cut, and the material was heavily edited so that the romantic aspects of the plot were played down in favour of farcical comedy. Even so, Kay's tender ballad 'Someone to Watch Over

Me' has remained the most beloved of the show's songs.

COLERIDGE-TAYLOR PERKINSON (1932–2004)
Sinfonietta No. 1 (1953) – Song Form (Largo)

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson was an African American composer named after fellow composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. Raised and educated in New York before becoming a faculty member of Brooklyn College, Perkinson wrote concert works and film scores, as well as arrangements for Marvin Gaye among many others, blending Romanticism and neo-Classical counterpoint with the blues, spirituals and folk music. He summed up the background to this versatility in 1978: 'I cannot define Black music. I could say that it is a music that has its genesis in the Black psyche or the Black social life, but it is very difficult to say what Black music really is. There are kinds of Black music, just as there are kinds of other musics.'

Perkinson wrote his Sinfonietta No. 1 when he was barely 22 years old, but the work was not premiered until 1966. The Sinfonietta reflects the eclectic nature of his output, embracing Baroque counterpoint, Classical form and Romantic harmony, as well as African American idioms including the blues and spirituals. 'Song Form', the second of three movements, is characterised by long-breathed lines and poignant dissonances.

CHARLES WILLIAMS (1893–1978)
Devil's Galop (1946)

'A Gestapo agent pretending to be an MI5 agent pretending to be a Gestapo agent. It made her head hurt to think about it.' Kate Atkinson's *Transcription* (2018) follows Juliet Armstrong as she enters the world of espionage during the Second World War. Just after the war, in 1946, the radio thriller *Dick Barton – Secret Agent* was first aired on the BBC Light Programme. Its theme tune was *Devil's Galop* by Charles Williams, a piece that has since been used in numerous contexts, including *Dad's Army*, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, *That Mitchell and Webb Sound* and *30 Rock*. With its scurrying figures and exciting sense of momentum, it is one of the most memorable and evocative pieces of library music (stock music for use in radio, television and film).

Charles Williams specialised in writing light orchestral library music. He studied composition at the Royal Academy of Music before joining Gaumont British Films in 1933, working there until 1939. He composed music for over 50 films as well as for radio programmes, and conducted the Queen's Hall Light Orchestra before forming his own concert orchestra. An adaptation of his piece *High Adventure* is still used as the theme music for BBC Radio's *Friday Night Is Music Night*.

ANNA CLYNE (born 1980)
Fractured Time (2020)

Anna Clyne is originally from the UK but is now based in the USA. She started writing music at the age of 7 and in turn has become involved in numerous projects mentoring young composers. Her music has been inspired by the visual arts, such as the paintings of Mark Rothko; by dance, in collaborations with choreographers; by technology, exploring elements of sound design and electronica; and by a number of soloists for whom she has composed.

Clyne has said that 'musical compositions are living, breathing things'; she relishes hearing her music varied with each performance, taking on a life of its own. She says that *Fractured Time* 'explores the experience of time in states of fever, lucidity and anxiety during its brief and turbulent six minutes'. This sense of a musical fever dream is conveyed through juxtapositions of mood and style, an almost cartoonish energy and sudden moments of calm.

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732–1809)
The Creation (1798) – Representation of Chaos

Haydn spent much of his career at the Esterházy Palace in Hungary, until 1790, when changes at court allowed him to travel. He opted to visit England after the impresario Johann Peter Salomon arrived on his Vienna doorstep declaring: 'I am

INTERVAL: 20 MINUTES

Salomon of London and I have come to fetch you.’

In London, after hearing Handel’s oratorios in Westminster Abbey, Haydn was inspired to compose his own effort in the genre. When Haydn left England, Salomon presented him with a (now lost) anonymous libretto, *The Creation of the World*, based on the Psalms, the Book of Genesis and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Back in Vienna, Haydn showed it to the imperial librarian (and former friend and patron of Mozart) Gottfried van Swieten, who declared: ‘I recognised at once that such an exalted subject would give Haydn the opportunity I had long desired, to show the whole compass of his profound accomplishments and to express the full power of his inexhaustible genius’.

Haydn decided to publish the work in both German and English – the first bilingual composition of its kind – so van Swieten translated the original libretto into German and then back into English in a way that would now fit the music. The work was completed in 1798 and opens with a mesmerising introduction, the ‘Representation of Chaos’, depicting the formless void of the universe before the creation of Heaven and Earth.

THOMAS ADÈS (born 1971)
Hotel Suite from ‘Powder Her Face’ (1995, arr. 2018) – overture

The lid is bright blue enamel, inlaid with mother-of-pearl palm trees. The clasp is still springy and snaps open. There’s no powder-puff and the mirror is covered in a thin film of powder and the powder itself – a compacted pale pink – has been worn down in the middle to reveal a circle of silver metal ...

Kate Atkinson’s *Human Croquet* (1997) touches on themes of sex and faded glamour and 1960s mores, all of which permeate the 1995 chamber opera *Powder Her Face* by British composer Thomas Adès. With its frank onstage depictions of sexual encounters the opera charts the life of Margaret, Duchess of Argyll, from dazzling debutante in the 1930s via sex symbol in the 1960s to tragic destitution in 1990s. Her opulent lifestyle spanned marriages, divorces and affairs – notably a dalliance with a waiter that led to her husband divorcing her on 88 counts of adultery. Adès’s sound-world bears the influence of Berg’s opera *Lulu*, as well as Britten and Weill. The third of the suites formed from the opera is the *Hotel Suite* of 2018, which opens with a raucous overture full of brazen whoops and swoops, tango rhythms and suggestive syncopation.

GEORGE GERSHWIN
Shall We Dance (1937) – ‘Walking the Dog’ (Promenade)

Walking the dog swallowed up more time than Jackson had expected ... He unzipped the rucksack and said, ‘Come on, get in,’ to the dog. Jackson hadn’t realized that dogs could frown.

Started Early, Took My Dog (2010) – named after the Emily Dickinson poem of the same name – is one of several Kate Atkinson novels to feature private investigator Jackson Brodie. George Gershwin’s ‘Walking the Dog’ was written for a rather frothier story: *Shall We Dance*, starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, who had met performing the Gershwin brothers’ *Girl Crazy*.

The delightful number ‘Walking the Dog’ (later published separately as *Promenade*) takes place on ship: Fred Astaire’s character spots Ginger Rogers walking her dog on deck and commandeers a Great Dane as an excuse to join her. Despite the joyous nature of its score, *Shall We Dance* was written as he struggled against conflicting musical currents. By juxtaposing classical ballet with tap, the musical highlighted the unnecessary conflict between ‘high art’ and popular culture. An exchange between Astaire’s character and his rather sniffy, traditionalist manager is illustrative:

‘I wish we could combine the technique of the ballet with the warmth and passion of this other mood.’

‘Mood? What other mood? You mean this jazz business?’

Even so, when Gershwin did make forays into a more conventionally classical style, he faced accusations that he had lost the common touch. In a telegram to his agent, he retorted: ‘RUMORS ABOUT Highbrow music ridiculous stop AM OUT TO WRITE HITS.’

Programme notes © Joanna Wyld

Joanna Wyld regularly writes for the Aldeburgh, Salzburg, Oxford Lieder and Cambridge Music festivals, the Southbank Centre, Wigmore Hall and Saffron Hall, and many of the major UK orchestras. She has won awards for her creative writing, and wrote the libretto to Robert Huggill’s opera *The Gardeners*, which was premiered in London in 2019.

ADAM HICKOX
CONDUCTOR

Born in 1996, Adam Hickox studied Music and Composition with Robin Holloway at the University of Cambridge, and conducting with Sian Edwards at the Royal Academy of Music. He was one of two Conducting Fellows at the Tanglewood Festival in 2021 and earlier in his career he assisted conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Sir John Eliot Gardiner and Lahav Shani. At the end of last year he was appointed Principal Conductor of the Glyndebourne Sinfonia.

In recent seasons he has appeared with the BBC, BBC Scottish and Gävle Symphony orchestras, Rotterdam Philharmonic and Royal Philharmonic orchestras, Orchestre de Paris, Ulster Orchestra and Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León. In opera he has conducted *Tosca* for Opera North and *Hansel and Gretel* at the Royal Scottish Conservatoire. Later this year he conducts *Candide* for Norwegian Opera as well as *Hansel and Gretel* in his debut with Hamburg State Opera.

Engagements this season include his debuts with the Iceland and St Gallen Symphony orchestras, BBC Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, as well as with Norwegian Opera.

KATE ATKINSON
AUTHOR/READER

Kate Atkinson won the Whitbread Book of the Year Award with her first novel, *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* (1995).

Her 2013 novel *Life After Life*, now a BBC TV series starring Thomasin McKenzie, won the South Bank Sky Arts Literature Prize and the Costa Novel of the Year Award, was shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction and was also voted Book of the Year by the independent booksellers associations on both sides of the Atlantic.

A God in Ruins (2015), also a winner of the Costa Novel of the Year Award, is a companion to *Life After Life*, although the two can be read independently.

Her five bestselling novels featuring former detective Jackson Brodie – *Case Histories*, *One Good Turn*, *When Will There Be Good News?*, *Started Early, Took My Dog* and *Big Sky* – became the BBC TV series *Case Histories*, starring Jason Isaacs.

Kate Atkinson was appointed MBE in the 2011 Queen's Birthday Honours List and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

JAMIE PARKER
VOCALIST

Jamie Parker won an Olivier Award (2017) and was nominated for a Tony Award (2018) for *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*.

His film roles include Lieutenant Richards (1917), directed by Sir Sam Mendes; Scripps (*The History Boys*) and Estate Agent (*The Lady in the Van*), both directed by Sir Nicholas Hytner; as well as Werner von Haefthen (*Valkyrie*) and John Dudley (*Becoming Elizabeth*). His television credits include *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*, *Count Arthur Strong*, *Silk*, *Imagine Van Gogh*, *Silent Witness* and *Maxwell* for the BBC; *Des* for ITV; and *Lawless* for Sky.

He has appeared on Broadway and at leading UK venues, including the National Theatre, Palace Theatre, Savoy Theatre, Old Vic, Menier Chocolate Factory and Shakespeare's Globe. Other stage performances include *Guys and Dolls*, *Henry IV* Parts 1 and 2, *Henry V*, *The History Boys*, *The Gondoliers*, *High Society* and *Assassins*, among many others.

He has made numerous recordings for BBC audio dramas, as well as for Radio 4's *Book at Bedtime* and *Book of the Week*.

At the BBC Proms he performed in a tribute to Frank Sinatra with the John Wilson Orchestra (2015) and in a celebration of Broadway musicals with the BBC Concert Orchestra (2021).



FRIDAY 10 MAY 7.30pm

Old Pictures, New Worlds

JOSÉ MAURÍCIO NUNES GARCIA

Missa de Santa Cecilia

MODEST MUSSORGSKY, ORCH. RAVEL

Pictures at an Exhibition

April Koyejo-Audiger soprano

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Chief Conductor Sakari Oramo opened this season, which features themes of voyaging and storytelling, including Stravinsky's *The Firebird* and Ravel's *Shéhérazade* and an evening of words and music with author Kate Atkinson. There are world and UK premieres from Detlev Glanert, Tebogo Monnakgotla, Outi Tarkiainen and Lotta Wennäkoski, and the BBC SO takes a deep dive into the musical worlds of American composer Missy Mazzoli, including a concert with Principal Guest Conductor Dalia Stasevska, and 'Italian Radicals' Luciano Berio, Luigi Dallapiccola, Bruno Maderna and Luigi Nono in two Total Immersion days. Performances with the

BBC Symphony Chorus include José Maurício Nunes Garcia's *Missa di Santa Cecília* (1826).

In addition to its Barbican concerts, the BBC SO makes appearances across the UK and beyond and gives regular free concerts at its Maida Vale studios.

You can hear the vast majority of the BBC SO's performances on BBC Radio 3 and BBC Sounds, with all 2023 Proms currently available on BBC Sounds, and a number of Proms, including the First and Last Nights, available to watch on BBC iPlayer.

The BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus – alongside the BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Singers and BBC Proms – offer innovative education and community activities and take a lead role in the BBC Ten Pieces and BBC Young Composer programmes, including work with schools, young people and families in East London ahead of the BBC SO's move in 2025 to its new home at London's East Bank cultural quarter in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford.

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Damon Oliver

Bassoons
Ben Hudson
Graham Hobbs

Contrabassoon
Steven Magee

Horns
Nicholas Korth
Michael Murray
Jenny Cox
Nicholas Hougham
Mark Wood

Trumpets
Niall Keatley
Joseph Atkins
Martin Hurrell

Trombones
Helen Vollam
Dan Jenkins

Bass Trombone
Robert O'Neill

Tuba
Sam Elliott

Timpani
Elsa Bradley

Percussion
Alex Neal
Fiona Ritchie
Joe Cooper

Harp
Elizabeth Bass

Piano/Celesta
Elizabeth Burley

*The list of players was
correct at the time of
going to press*

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RADIO **3**



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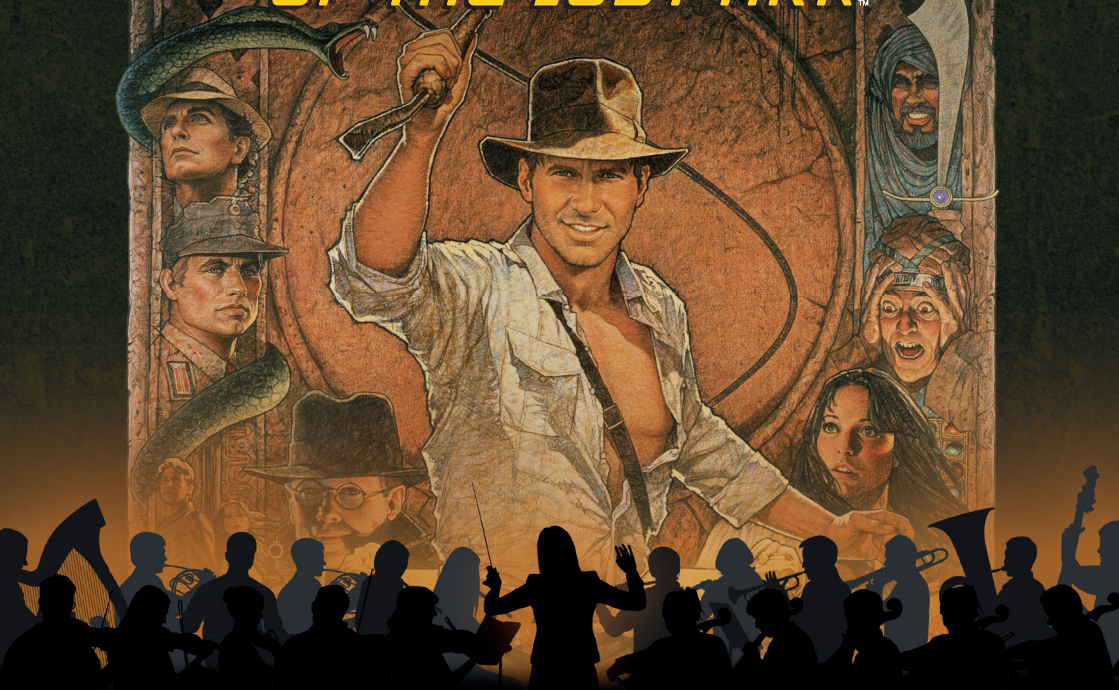
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