

CBSO

City of
Birmingham
Symphony
Orchestra

**ORCHESTRAL
RESIDENCY**

CBSO ORCHESTRAL RESIDENCY

A programme designed by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra to support young musicians taking the next steps towards a professional orchestral career.

The CBSO Orchestral Residency offers exceptional young musicians aged 21 to 25 the opportunity to rehearse and perform alongside one of Europe's leading symphony orchestras, directed by some of the most inspiring conductors of our time. We will create a unique orchestra for each annual residency, made up in equal parts of CBSO musicians and young musicians aspiring to join the ranks of our profession.

The programme will consist of an intensive residential week of activity in July every year, culminating in a concert at Birmingham's Symphony Hall. It combines incredible music-making with networking, mentoring, and professional development — giving musicians real insight into the life of a modern orchestral player.

ABOUT THE CBSO

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is an internationally celebrated symphony orchestra, at home in Birmingham. A family of incredible musicians, led by Music Director Kazuki Yamada, proud to make exciting musical experiences that matter.

Resident at Symphony Hall, the orchestra's musicians perform over 150 concerts each year in Birmingham, the UK and around the world, with music that ranges from classics to contemporary, soundtracks to symphonies, and everything in between.

For more than 100 years, the CBSO has been involved in every aspect of music-making in the Midlands. And through its wide-reaching community and education projects, choruses, and youth ensembles, this continues to grow – helping to build a life-long love of music for audiences, communities and musicians across Birmingham, the West Midlands and beyond.

ABOUT THE 2026 RESIDENCY

During the 2026 CBSO Orchestral Residency, participants will:

- Be conducted by Edward Gardner, former Principal Guest Conductor of the CBSO and Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra
- Perform ambitious, large-scale works
- Play in one of the most iconic orchestral concert halls in the world – Birmingham's Symphony Hall
- Rehearse and perform side by side with CBSO musicians
- Receive mentorship and sectional coaching from CBSO players, gaining first-hand experience of professional rehearsal discipline, ensemble communication, and artistic collaboration
- Take part in career-focused workshops covering audition preparation, portfolio careers, and orchestral life

WHEN AND WHERE:

Dates: 13-17 July 2026

Conductor: Edward Gardner

Rehearsal Venue: CBSO Centre, Birmingham

Concert Venue: Birmingham Symphony Hall

Accommodation in Birmingham is provided (including 17 July)

Programme:

Varèse, Ionisation

Varèse, Amériques

Adams, Harmonielehre

WHO CAN APPLY:

The CBSO Orchestral Residency is open to advanced instrumentalists, aged 21 (by 1 July 2026) to 25, who are aspiring to a professional orchestral career. We will accept applications from the following instruments: Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, French Horn, Trumpet, Trombone (both tenor and bass), Tuba, Percussion and Harp. There are also optional excerpts for woodwind doubling instruments in the second round auditions.

Applicants must be currently living in the UK, and can include international students studying in the UK, subject to appropriate visa permissions.

We particularly encourage applications from those underrepresented in the orchestral sector, including musicians from the Global Majority; deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent musicians; LGBTQ+ musicians; those from lower socio-economic backgrounds; and women and marginalised genders in particular instruments.

AUDITIONS

Auditions for the CBSO Orchestral Residency will be held in two rounds.

ROUND 1

For Round 1, you will need to submit an audio clip alongside your application form on the relevant instrument posting on musicalchairs.info.

Details of the instrument specific repertoire required for both audition rounds are included in the Audition Booklet document attached to each posting.

All applications and auditions for Round 1 are anonymised – no personal information will be available to the panel.

Auditions should be recorded unaccompanied and in a single take. We understand that candidates may have varying access to recording technology so your submission will not be judged on audio quality. However, you may find the following recording guidelines useful.

Guidelines for Recordings:

- A voice-note app on a smartphone is sufficient – we do not expect professional quality recordings
- Ensure you are a sufficient distance from the microphone on your device to not distort the sound: 2-3 meters is recommended
- Please do not speak in your recording – this audition round is anonymous
- Please do not alter the audio in any way.

Deadline: All applications must be submitted by 12pm on Monday 17 November 2025.
You will find out the results of your audition by **Friday 19 December 2025.**

ROUND 2

If you are invited to a Round 2 audition, this will take place in person in front of a panel of CBSO musicians.

Auditions will be held at Conservatoire venues across the UK (London, Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff and Glasgow) on various dates between 18 January and 21 February 2026. Most candidates will be able to audition at their most local venue, but in exceptional cases we may ask candidates to audition outside their home base, for which associated travel costs would be covered.

Auditions will mimic professional CBSO orchestral auditions and will include playing the repertoire specified in the audition booklet without accompaniment. You may be asked to respond to some feedback in a masterclass-style approach, and sight reading may also be given.

RESIDENCY BENEFITS

Perform side by side with CBSO musicians in concert.

Receive tailored mentorship and feedback from CBSO players.

Develop professional orchestral experience and insight.

Take part in workshops exploring audition preparation and career development.

Network with leading orchestral professionals.

COSTS AND SUPPORT

All costs of this programme have been covered thanks to generous support from the Dunard Fund, alongside our donors and partners. This includes the accommodation costs associated with the residency.

JOIN US

The CBSO Orchestral Residency is more than a course — it's an opportunity to develop skills, networks, and understanding, preparing the next generation of orchestral musicians for the demands and rewards of a life in music.

TIMELINE

October 2025	Applications open
17 November 2025	Applications close
19 December 2025	First Round Audition results shared
January and February Dates TBC	Second Round Live Auditions
6 March 2026	Second Round Audition results shared
8 June 2026, 6pm-7pm	Zoom welcome meeting
13-17 July	CBSO Orchestral Residency

CBSO ORCHESTRAL RESIDENCY FAQs

Who is the CBSO Orchestral Residency for?

The Residency is designed for pre-professional orchestral musicians aged 21 (by 1 July 2026) - to aged 25. It's ideal for players preparing to take the next step towards a professional orchestral career.

What standard do I need to be?

Applicants should be performing at a minimum of post-Grade 8 or Diploma level, with strong ensemble skills and a keen interest in orchestral playing.

Do I need to be living in the UK to apply?

You do not need to be a UK citizen, but you must be living or studying in the UK to apply. International musicians must ensure they have the relevant visa permissions to accept an offer of a place.

What will I do during the Residency?

You'll rehearse and perform side by side with CBSO musicians, gaining first-hand experience of professional orchestral life. The residency includes full orchestral rehearsals, sectional coaching, professional development sessions on topics like audition preparation, ensemble leadership, and portfolio careers.

What repertoire will we perform?

In 2026, the programme will include *Varèse Ionisation and Amériques*, and Adams *Harmonielehre*.

When does the course take place?

The 2026 programme will take place from 13-17 July.

Where will the rehearsals be held?

Rehearsals will take place in Birmingham at the CBSO Centre and Symphony Hall, with the final performance in Birmingham's Symphony Hall. Full details will be shared with successful applicants.

Do I need to reapply each year?

Yes. The CBSO Orchestral Residency runs on an annual audition basis, and all places are offered for one year only. Musicians who wish to return in a future year will need to reapply and audition again. This ensures each cohort reflects a balance of new talent and artistic development opportunities.

Is accommodation provided?

Accommodation for all participants will be provided in partnership with Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Details will be confirmed upon acceptance.

How do I apply?

To apply, you'll need to complete an online application, via Musical Chairs by **12pm on Monday 17 November**. Videos will be reviewed by a panel of CBSO musicians.

When are the in-person auditions held?

Second round auditions will be held between 18 January and 21 February 2026. These will be held at Conservatoires across the UK.

Is there a cost to take part?

The costs of this programme have been covered thanks to generous support from the Dunard Fund, alongside our donors and partners. This includes accommodation costs associated with the programme, including accommodation after the concert should you need it.

Will travel and subsistence costs be covered?

Musicians will be expected to cover the costs of travel to and from Birmingham as well as subsistence for the week. If these costs are a barrier to joining the programme, successful applicants should let us know in writing and we would endeavour to support them in meeting these costs.

Will the Residency lead to professional opportunities?

The CBSO Orchestral Residency is designed to prepare musicians for professional auditions and orchestral life. Musicians will gain invaluable experience, mentorship, and contacts within the CBSO network – skills and relationships that can directly support entry into the profession. There may be the possibility of being added to the CBSO's extra work lists.

Who supports the programme?

The CBSO Orchestral Residency is generously supported by the Dunard Fund, alongside CBSO donors and partners committed to nurturing the next generation of orchestral talent.

If I am already on the CBSO extra work lists, can I apply?

This programme is for those not yet on our extra work lists.

If I have participated in the CBSO Orchestral Training Scheme or Career Accelerator scheme, am I also eligible to apply to the CBSO Orchestral Residency?

Yes.