



Hallé's New Principal Conductor Kahchun Wong

Kahchun Wong and the Hallé launch thrilling new chapter with a specially created suite of pieces from Britten's *The Prince of the Pagodas* and Mahler's First Symphony

Hallé's strikingly diverse inaugural season with its Singaporean Principal Conductor trains the spotlight on majestic symphonies by Beethoven, Brahms, Bruckner, Mahler and Shostakovich

Conductor's compelling programmes also include sublime scores by, among others, Unsuk Chin, Tan Dun, Akira Ifukube and James MacMillan

[Kahchun Wong] will no doubt set Manchester alight when he succeeds Sir Mark Elder at the Hallé. Indeed, he will turn heads and move hearts wherever he goes,'

Bachtrack, 11 February 2024



Manchester has long shown the world how to blend change with tradition. The two elements are sure to be fully embraced in the city again during Kahchun Wong's inaugural season as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Hallé. He is set to launch his tenure on Thursday 26 September 2024 with the spellbinding combination of a new suite of pieces drawn from Benjamin Britten's ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas* and Mahler's Symphony No.1 'Titan'. The charismatic Singaporean conductor, recently hailed as 'a ball of energy and charm' by the *Observer*, returns throughout the season to perform great landmarks from the symphonic repertoire, thrilling scores that merge the musical cultures of East and West, and vibrant works from Britain and beyond that offer audiences the chance to experience fresh perspectives on the Hallé's acclaimed artistry.

"Since my first encounter with the Hallé just over eighteen months ago, we've had a very positive and intense relationship together," notes Kahchun Wong. "We've spent six whole days recording *The Prince of the Pagodas*, followed by a tour to Spain. Most recently, we performed Fauré's *Requiem* at The Bridgewater Hall, which was a perfect introduction to our excellent Hallé Choir."

Wong's first season at the helm of the Hallé reflects his diverse musical passions and clear understanding of the orchestra's deep history. His choice of repertoire, ideally suited to the Hallé's virtuosity and feeling for tonal nuance, spans a vast expanse of orchestral styles and musical expression. In addition to monumental symphonies by Mahler, Bruckner, Brahms, Shostakovich and Beethoven, the conductor has also programmed Malcolm Arnold's playful *Four Scottish Dances* (1957); James MacMillan's percussion concerto *Veni, veni Emmanuel* (1991-92) with Colin Currie as soloist; the *Japanese Suite* for orchestra (1991) by Akira Ifukube; Tan Dun's Violin Concerto *Fire Ritual* (2018), written for and played here by Eldbjørg Hemsing; and Unsuk Chin's *Šu* (2009).

"We've put a lot of thought into our first season together," the conductor comments. "Each concert connects the Hallé's great traditions with relevance to our time. Britten follows the orchestra's excellent work in Elgar and Vaughan Williams under my predecessor, Sir Mark Elder. Mahler is irrevocably linked to Sir John Barbirolli, and Beethoven was championed by Sir Charles Hallé right from the very first season of our orchestra in 1858. In many of his programmes, Hallé also often conducted music by his contemporaries alongside established masterworks. We are deeply aware of and inspired by this link between the past, present and future and hope this will become a hallmark of our collaboration together."

Kahchun Wong opens the Hallé's season with the world premiere of a 30-minute Suite drawn from *The Prince of the Pagodas*. Conductor and orchestra became deeply immersed in the ballet's music during recording sessions held at Hallé St Peter's. Their double-disc album, scheduled for release on 1 November 2024, is only the third complete studio recording of Britten's work. "*The Prince of the Pagodas* was always the one work with which we wanted to open our season. The question was should we perform the two-hour version or one of the several suites that have been made from it. I had the pleasure of speaking with Colin Matthews, who knew Britten very well, and together we came up with our own short suite of *Pagoda* pieces. Britten and Mahler – what a pairing! I've had a lifelong fascination with Mahler's music, because it transcends glass ceilings. We'll perform his Second Symphony together in January and many more of his works in coming seasons. I'm also delighted that Dr John Phillips, one of four scholars who completed what is known as the SPCM finale of Bruckner's Symphony No.9, has made further revisions to their edition. We will perform this newest version of the finale alongside the first three movements, which will be recorded live for the Hallé label."

Kahchun Wong is determined to build on Sir Mark Elder's remarkable legacy with the Hallé. "Mark has been incredibly generous and supportive," he comments. "I look forward to him returning as our Conductor Emeritus. I suspect we will have a few glasses of wine together! I have known the orchestra on record from when I was just beginning my journey in music. I am deeply honoured to be the latest guardian of our extraordinary tradition."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Upcoming concerts in the Hallé 24/25 season, featuring Kahchun Wong include:

Thursday 26 September 2024, 7:30pm, The Bridgewater Hall
Kahchun Wong makes debut as Hallé's new Principal Conductor

Britten *The Prince of the Pagodas*: Suite (arranged by Colin Matthews and Kahchun Wong)
Mahler Symphony No.1

Kahchun Wong conductor

Thursday 3 October 2024, 6:00pm, The Bridgewater Hall
Rush Hour: Fire Rituals

Tan Dun Violin Concerto: *Fire Ritual*
Stravinsky *The Firebird*: Suite

Kahchun Wong conductor | **Eldbjørg Hemsing** violin

Saturday 26 October 2024, 7:30pm The Bridgewater Hall
Bruckner's Ninth Symphony

Bruckner Symphony No.9 (four movement version with fourth movement revised by Dr John A Phillips)

Kahchun Wong conductor

Thursday 28 November 2024, 7:30pm, The Bridgewater Hall

Sunday 1 December 2024, 4:00pm, The Bridgewater Hall

Beethoven's Seventh Symphony

Arnold *Four Scottish Dances*

MacMillan *Veni, veni Emmanuel* (Percussion Concerto)

Beethoven Symphony No.7

Kahchun Wong conductor | **Colin Currie** percussion

Thursday 16 January 2025, 7:30 pm, The Bridgewater Hall

Mahler's Resurrection Symphony

Mahler Symphony No.2 *Resurrection*

Kahchun Wong conductor | **Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha** soprano |

Dame Sarah Connolly mezzo-soprano | **Hallé Choir** | **Hallé Youth Choir**

Thursday 20 March 2025, 7:30pm, The Bridgewater Hall

Sunday 23 March 2025, 4:00pm, The Bridgewater Hall

Brahms's Symphony No.1

Ifukube *Japanese Suite for Orchestra*

Liszt Piano Concerto No.1

Brahms Symphony No.1

Kahchun Wong conductor | **Mariam Batsashvili** piano

Thursday 10 April 2025, 7:30pm, The Bridgewater Hall

Sunday 13 April 2025, 4:00pm, The Bridgewater Hall

Shostakovich's Symphony No.5

Prokofiev Symphony No.1 *Classical*

Arutiunian Trumpet Concerto No.1

Shostakovich Symphony No.5

Kahchun Wong conductor | **Gareth Small** Trumpet Section Leader