



Commissioning Brief



Commissioning Brief No.: 31334

Music Matters

For BBC Radio 3, late summer 2027-April 2028

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SECTION A: EDITORIAL OPPORTUNITY

Commissioning Brief ID / Title: **31334**: Music Matters

Commissioning Owner	Ruth Thomson
Commissioning Contact	David Ireland
Commissioning Brief Title	Music Matters
Commissioning Round	2027/28 – Round 3 – Music Matters
Network	Radio 3
Guide Price	£3,045 per episode.
Genre	Music - Classical
Duration	56'30"
No. of Episodes	16
Transmission Period	Late summer 2027 – April 2028
Slot Day	Saturday
Slot Time	1300-1400
Production Location	anywhere

Important Points to Note:

- All proposals must be submitted via **PiCoS** and will go through **production eligibility checks**.
- The **Production Eligibility Questionnaire** can be found in **Appendix 1**, but **only needs to be completed if you do not already make regular music output for the network**. This is the first part of your submission that the BBC will consider as part of the process.
- **Short Proposals** and your responses to the **Production Questionnaire** must be submitted via **PiCoS** before the deadline at **noon on Tuesday 17 November 2026**.

More information relating to all commissioning briefs and rounds, regardless of Network can be found on the [‘Pitching Ideas’](#) page of the Radio Commissioning Website.



1. BBC Radio 3

About BBC Radio 3

Radio 3 is proudly the home of classical music and the BBC Proms. We have such a range of programming and resources at our fingertips that allow us to share with our listeners incredible music from across the last thousand years in astonishing performances. We allow our listeners to explore with us and share the knowledge and insight of some of the finest minds working in classical music and we make our programmes for no one other than our listeners.

We welcome everyone with warmth and open arms, whether it's someone who's just discovered us on social media and joined us to hear more of what they liked, or a listener who's been with Radio 3 for many years and knows the station inside out; we want everyone to share the journey through this amazing music.

Radio 3 has a power and ability to present and explore music like no one else. Our programmes are joyful, warm, generous, intelligent, entertaining and welcoming. They also need to challenge, to dig deep, to encourage us to ask questions and reveal things about the music we listen to and ourselves.

2. Music Matters

What matters in music and why does music matter? This strand talks to the people who matter in music, it delves into the stories that matter in music and it presents the most compelling music that can change lives.

Music Matters holds a unique place in Radio 3's programming; at its best and most successful it combines in-depth, intelligent, and revelatory storytelling with a brilliantly engaging music sequence. The format allows for multilayered and creative approaches; you might choose to tell the stories through topical investigative journalism that includes multiple voices. Equally, you might tell the story with a single compelling voice, with the use of incredible archive or unexpected contributors. Another approach could be bringing to air people who tell compelling stories about classical music but aren't often heard on Radio 3. Whatever the story and treatment, it will have serious depth; we want to hear stories that haven't yet been told, issues that haven't yet been investigated, narratives that will always be relevant to the general interests of listeners, something listeners will care about, will have impact and create wider interest around the programmes.

We are looking for proposals for individual series of up to 6 programmes but are also open to ideas which could run for longer or return during the year.

We are expecting to award these series to multiple production suppliers.



From late summer 2027 through to April 2028, Music Matters is returning to 1pm on a Saturday afternoon. Following on directly from Earlier...with Jools Holland, this is an opportunity to build on that audience and deliver listeners to Record Review.

As well as the stories you tell, crucial to the success of the programme is a consistent and convincing classical music policy that sits within the overall sequence of programming on Radio 3. We are looking for a speech to music ratio of around 25:75. The music should engage and illuminate, complementing the speech, and tell its own story in the general narrative of the series.

The presenter of each series may have a high profile within or beyond the classical music world but that is by no means essential. Regardless of their profile, they will be a compelling storyteller with highly developed skills of communicating ideas and enthusiasms in the most engaging way. They may be an existing Radio 3 presenter or could be new to the network. Either way, they will be comfortable behind a microphone and should wear their knowledge lightly speaking informally to listeners.

The programme should be targeted at the broadest possible range of listeners, those who don't yet listen to Radio 3, whilst also still delighting and surprising the core, existing audience.

We are looking forward to hearing the story you're going to tell, hearing about who's going to tell it and how you are going to do it. We also want to know how you will ensure your programmes captivate listeners working as a linear listen on a Saturday afternoon as well as standing out as a compelling series on BBC Sounds that's essential listening for anyone who cares about music.

Recent highlights

The following details of recently broadcast Music Matters give a sense of the range and depth of topics and approaches that may work for the programme:

The President and the Polka: Former BBC North America editor and Today presenter Justin Webb explores the surprising relationship between classical music and American politics in this six-part series. From the days of the Founding Fathers, music was used to assert an American identity, distinct from a European musical tradition. And evolving political and social ideals, dreams and struggles were mirrored in the music being created - from Manifest Destiny to #MeToo, from Civil War to Civil Rights.

In The Beginning: A six-part series with composer James MacMillan and guests exploring how composers have interpreted the biblical story of creation, how music captures Earth's beauty, and humanity's responsibility toward the environment. Guests include Former Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams, Prof Margarita Mooney Clayton, composer Jay Capperault and musicologist Dr Sarah Moerman.



Curtain Up: Classical Stories of Musical Theatre: Tenor Nicky Spence explores the deep and often-overlooked connections between classical music and the world of musical theatre. From how musicals were born out of operetta, to composers like Leonard Bernstein who worked in both worlds, and the influence of classical music on new musicals today. With guests including Renee Fleming and David Charles Abell, and specially recorded musical extracts recorded by Nicky and his husband, the pianist Dylan Perez.

Mark Radcliffe's Choral Odyssey: A two-part series with broadcaster Mark Radcliffe sharing his love of choral music. As a child, he was taken by his father to see Handel's Messiah in Manchester and was struck by the majesty and power of the human voice - over the years, his interest grew and diversified. His music choices include Duruflé's Requiem, Tallis's Spem in Alium, Barber's Agnus Dei, Gorecki's Totus Tuus and the Dies Irae from Mozart's Requiem. Mark juxtaposes these with more modern uses of choral sound like Talk Talk's I Believe In You.

Turning the Page: Violinist Tasmin Little speaks to artists about leaving the world of performance behind. With guests including soprano Lesley Garrett, cellist Matthew Barley, and pianists Maria João Pires and Kathryn Stott.

Musical Minds: Psychotherapist and broadcaster Nemone Metaxas delves into our psychological relationship with music and talks to some of classical music's brightest stars to untangle why music can be such a powerful presence in our lives. Across three episodes her guests are pianist Steven Osborne, conductor Lidiya Yankovskaya, and percussionist Evelyn Glennie. They discuss performance anxiety, entrancing an audience, and what it means to really listen.

Arranging the Air: In this four-part series, Radio 3 presenter Martin Handley demystifies the role of the conductor with guests including Jakub Hrusa, Dalia Stasevska, Mark Wigglesworth, Sofi Jeannin, Harry Christophers, Sian Edwards, Trevor Pinnock, and the 99-year-old Herbert Blomstedt. What does a conductor actually do? Are they necessary, and how did the role evolve?

The Audience

The Radio 3 audience is broad – we want to welcome anyone and everyone who wants to listen – and whilst the programmes should be designed for both established and new listeners, the group we are targeting is that of the culturally curious 45-64 year olds. They are people who might head to a museum or gallery if they have the opportunity; they might also go to a cultural event – the theatre or a concert - if they live in an area with access. They might listen to Radio 4 (the majority of Radio 3 listeners do listen to Radio 4), or they might be the type of person who listens to a history podcast or watches a BBC Two or BBC Four documentary.



3. Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion is a priority for all of us. We want BBC Music demonstrably to be the best organisation in the audio sector to work for and with; one which reflects the diversity of the UK; and where people feel welcomed, appreciated, respected, and can be themselves and produce their best work.

Radio 3 is dedicated to improving diversity and inclusion across the station through a long-term strategy which will lead to an even richer musical and cultural offering. Radio 3 monitors representation across the network and has launched several creative initiatives on diversity – including our partnership projects with the Arts and Humanities Research Council to support research on and performance of composers from diverse backgrounds, and the Open Music scheme designed to bring creatives and musicians of all genres, styles and backgrounds from across the UK to the BBC.

The station is integral to BBC Radio's Diversity and Inclusion commitment, looking for new approaches to evolve listener engagement which will broaden the appeal of the network to new audiences. It also contributes to a more diverse and inclusive classical music industry as a whole, as well as other genres of music and culture. We are interested to hear your inclusive content ideas and how they might be expressed across the music played, stories told and voices heard. You may wish to consider how your company aligns with the BBC's D&I Commissioning Commitments, or could do so in the future (See Appendix 2).

4. Sustainability

The BBC is committed to informing and inspiring listeners about how they, as individuals, can take steps towards more sustainable living.

Your proposal should consider how the editorial and production methods contribute towards the BBC's Net Zero strategy – you can read about this [here](#).

Where appropriate, sustainability themes should be woven into the editorial – either implicitly or explicitly. Unsustainable portrayals should be avoided in favour of showing more sustainable practices, e.g. if the narrative allows maybe a character takes a train journey instead of a flight, or presenters use re-usable cups instead of disposable ones. The BBC Radio Commissioning site contains inspiration across genres: [Sustainability In Programme Editorial](#)

Production methods should demonstrate good practice, minimising negative environmental impacts (e.g. from energy, waste, travel) and where possible making a positive contribution.

For further information please discuss sustainability with the Commissioning Editor, and see our Radio Commissioning site [here](#).



5. Success Measures

- Increased listener reach through Saturday lunchtime into the afternoon (as measured via RAJAR quarterly figures and BBC Sounds data)
- Evidence of impactful moments across the schedule, driving awareness and audience reach
- Positive response from audience, press and opinion formers
- Evidence of core listeners staying with Radio 3 and new listeners joining – particularly from the 45-64 age group
- Growing awareness and approval from the classical music community

Compliance and BBC Editorial Guidelines

You will be required to deliver programmes that are in line with the BBC's Editorial Guidelines and be able to adapt to the BBC's changing editorial and business needs during the period of the commission.



SECTION B: PROCESS, ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

STAGE 1: Short Proposal and Shortlisting

Step 1: Production Experience

- Review the Production Experience Questionnaire section in Appendix 1.
- Enter your responses in the 'Production Experience' section in PiCoS.
- The questionnaire is designed to allow the BBC to understand more about your company and your experience of producing Radio 3-style programmes.
- The evaluation team (see full list below in Section 2), will review all production questionnaires against the editorial brief set out in Section A before evaluating the Short Proposal.
- Note: your short proposal may be declined at this stage if the information provided indicates you do not meet the criteria, so please answer these questions carefully.

Step 2: Short Proposal

- Suppliers who performed best on their production questionnaire (by best demonstrating their experience and capability in producing (inset network/department) style programmes) will have their Short Proposal assessed and a shortlist will be compiled.
- Your Short Proposal should be no more than 250 words and summarise your specific ideas. (PiCoS will allow you to enter more words but you should still stay within the word count for this commissioning round in order for your proposal to be fully considered) The proposal should demonstrate your ability to produce the programme, and answer the editorial objectives and other requirements as set out in the Editorial Opportunity.
- Enter your proposal in the 'Short Proposal' section in PiCoS before the deadline at noon on Tuesday 17th November 2026.



Step 3: Shortlisting notification

You will be notified of the outcome of Stages 1 & 2. Shortlisted suppliers will be asked to submit a Full Proposal. No feedback will be provided for unsuccessful proposals at this stage.

STAGE 2: Full Proposal

Step 1: We may issue further relevant programme production information to all producers reaching this stage. If sensitive information is being released then producers will be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA).

Step 2: Producers will be invited to provide Full Proposals, via PiCoS, responding to this commissioning brief, which includes all the elements outlined in Section D (“Full Proposals”). For guidance, your Full Proposal should not exceed **two sides of A4** when printed using Arial font, size 11. (Any running orders can be in addition to this).

Step 3: Producers will be offered the opportunity to discuss the programme brief with the Commissioning Editor prior to submitting their Full Proposals.

Step 4: We will evaluate all full proposals against the editorial brief, as given above, and commission those we feel most successfully fulfil the brief and help to make up the most varied and balanced season of Music Matters.

Step 5: Producers who are successful will be notified on PiCoS. Feedback for rejected proposals will be also be given here. Further feedback can be requested at a later stage.

Note: At any stage of the process, we may need to come back to you to seek clarification. Your answers will be factored into the evaluation process as appropriate.

STAGE 3: Commission Awarded and Contract Signed

SECTION C: THE COMMISSIONING TIMETABLE

The commissioning process for this opportunity consists of a number of stages, as set out in the timetable below:

Stage	Timings	Activities
Launch	8 th October 2026	Publication of commissioning brief documentation and round opens in PiCoS.
Short Proposal and Eligibility (where appropriate) shortlisting	Noon on Tuesday 17th November 2026	Deadline for Short Proposal to be submitted via PiCoS.
	26 th November 2026	Suppliers shortlisted, notified of outcomes and asked to prepare a Full Proposal.
Full Proposal and shortlisting	1 st December 2026 – 12 th January 2027	Opportunity to discuss commissioning brief with Commissioners prior to submitting Full Proposal.
	Noon on Thursday 14th January 2027	Deadline for Full Proposal to be submitted via PiCoS. Evaluation panel shortlists Full Proposals.
Pitching meetings	18 th – 22 nd January 2027	Please keep these dates free in case a pitching meeting is required.
Conditional Commission and Contract	4 th February 2027	Commission award decision made, commissioning specification completed and contract issued.
	February 2027	Agreement of all programme-related deliverables and technical specifications (for further information on requirements, please see the BBC's commissioning website). Full contract signed.
Feedback	February 2027	Feedback on rejected Full Proposals, provided in PiCoS. Suppliers have two weeks to request further feedback.



We will assess your proposal according to this timetable. **Late submissions cannot be accepted.**

If you have any questions about this commissioning brief that need answering before you submit your Short Proposal and Experience responses, please ensure you email them to david.ireland@bbc.co.uk by 12th November at the latest.

Evaluation Team

The following people may be involved in the evaluation of your proposal at various stages:

- Sam Jackson, Controller, Radio 3 & BBC Proms
- Jeremy Evans, Head of Content Commissioning, Radio 3
- Ruth Thomson, Commissioning Executive, Radio 3
- David Ireland, Senior Planning Manager, Radio 3
- Representatives from Business Affairs and Procurement

Subject matter experts (e.g. production experts, visual content specialists, network management or finance advisors etc.) may also be consulted. See Section B for information on the commissioning process, timetable and assessment criteria.



SECTION D: FULL PROPOSALS AND REFERENCE INFORMATION

Please refer to this [important information](#) on the Radio commissioning website, regarding submission of your full proposal, including guidance on how to set out your budget.

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the requirements contained in this commissioning brief and on the commissioning website. Proposals not complying may be rejected by the Commissioner whose decision in this matter will be final.

All the information required should be included in the (maximum) 5 pages of your proposal.

The BBC reserves the right at any time prior to award of a commission, and without incurring any liability to the affected suppliers, to accept or reject any proposal, or to annul the commissioning process, rejecting all proposals.

This title will be commissioned under the [BBC Audio Terms of Trade](#).

More information relating to all commissioning briefs and rounds, regardless of station, can be found on the [Pitching ideas](#) page of the Radio commissioning website.



APPENDIX 1: Production Eligibility & Experience

Guidance

The Production Eligibility Questionnaire is the first part of your submission that the BBC will consider as part of the process.

Once completed, please copy and paste your responses into the **‘Production experience’** section of the Create Proposal page in PiCoS – as per the screen-shot below.

Eligibility

Production experience

i Tell us about your relevant experience, responding to the questions on the brief

1000 words remaining

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Note: The answers given in response to the above questions will only be considered during Stage 1 of the commissioning process. If you are shortlisted and invited to submit a Full Proposal, you may wish to consider repeating some, or all of the information given, in your Full Proposal.

Questionnaire

Complete Part 1 ONLY if you plan to submit a full proposal as part of a partnership.

Part 1: Partnerships

Please list each partnership and describe the responsibilities each partner will take.

[Insert details]

Please indicate the lead company with whom the BBC will contract.

[Insert details]



Please include the key personnel responsible for the production and delivery of the programme and details of the partnering company they are currently contracted to.

[Insert details]

You MUST complete this section:

Part 2: Production Eligibility & Experience

In no more than 100 words per question, please outline your relevant production experience, using recent examples, in the following areas:

2.1 We require a production base with relevant experience and staffing depth in national music-radio production, particularly within classical music – both studio-based and in the live event/OB environment.

[Insert details]

2.2 We require a production base with relevant ‘production team’ experience of producing a non-mainstream music radio programme, with strong current relationships with record labels and artists, as well as an understanding of the BBC Archive.

[Insert details]

2.3 We require a production base with an understanding of the importance of multi-platform content, and recent company/production team experience of producing engaging content for online and social platforms.

[Insert details]

2.4 We require a production base with relevant production team experience of presenter management to the level required and the ability to build those relationships quickly and effectively.

[Insert details]

2.5 This programme airs outside normal working hours, so we are particularly interested in hearing how any unexpected absence from the production team would be managed at short notice.

[Insert details]



APPENDIX 2: Diversity & Inclusion

We want BBC Music to be the best organisation in the audio sector to work with and for – with an inclusive culture, diverse teams and representative programmes. That’s why, across radio and television, we are prioritising £80m annually of our commissioning budget on commissions that meet our criteria for diverse and inclusive content.

Programmes must meet two of the three criteria to count towards the commitment:

- Diverse stories and portrayal on-air: Representing all audiences around the UK
- Diverse production leadership: Influential roles off-screen or off-air involved in shaping and making programmes for the BBC
- Diverse company leadership: Senior roles involved in shaping and leading production companies making programmes for the BBC

There will be opportunities throughout the commissioning process to discuss how programme-makers and suppliers are meeting the criteria. This will not affect whether or not your commission is accepted, and our commissioning teams will be on hand if you need any further support or advice. It is important to note that this commitment is not a commissioning criteria, but rather a way for us to invest a proportion of our existing commissioning budget to increase representation both on and off air.

The full definitions supporting each priority can be found [here](#) and some FAQs [here](#).

