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**THE ATLANTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PERFORMS SIBELIUS' FIFTH SYMPHONY**

**Free Strings of Persia Festival Paired with Concerts on February 26 & 28**

**ATLANTA**– The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra presents two classical giants, Sibelius and Lutosławski, paired with virtuosic artistry on Thursday and Saturday, February 26 and 28 at Symphony Hall. Preceding the performances, the free *Strings of Persia* festival features cellist Kian Soltani. Ticketholders can celebrate Persian culture with food, music and dance.

British conductor Nicholas Collon, Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony, leads the orchestra in Sibelius's Fifth Symphony. Written during a contemplative time in the composer's life, the Fifth reflects Sibelius's love of the natural world and Finnish folklore. Collon pairs this with Finnish composer Outi Tarkiainen's nature-inspired symphonic poem, *The Ring of Fire and Love*.

Joining the orchestra for Lutosławski's virtuosic Cello Concerto is virtuoso Kian Soltani, who has been described by *The Washington Post* as performing with "dazzling intonation and clarity of sound." Soltani's appearance with the ASO is presented with generous support from Farideh and Al Azadi.

His performance also inspires the pre-concert *Strings of Persia* festival, which will transform the Azadi Galleria into a vibrant showcase of Persian culture, featuring food and pastries, textiles, jewelry, art, and more. Learn more about the *Strings of Persia* festival at [aso.org/strings-of-persia](https://aso.org/strings-of-persia).

Concert tickets are on sale now at [aso.org](https://aso.org)

**CALENDAR LISTING**

Thursday, February 26, 2026, 8pm

Saturday, February 28, 2026, 8pm

Nicholas Collon, conductor

Kian Soltani, cello

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

OUTI TARKIAINEN: *The Ring of Fire and Love*

LUTOSŁAWSKI: Cello Concerto

SIBELIUS: Symphony No. 5

Vast Scandinavian snowfields and impenetrable pine forests meet a blazing musical spirit in Jean Sibelius's alluring Symphony No. 5. British maestro Nicholas Collon, chief conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony, makes his Atlanta Symphony Orchestra debut, along with the young cello firebrand Kian Soltani. Witness Soltani's superhuman artistry as he tackles Lutosławski's blisteringly virtuosic Cello Concerto. The concert opens with the ASO debut of Outi Tarkiainen's mystical symphonic poem *The Ring of Fire and Love*.

### **About Nicholas Collon**

British conductor Nicholas Collon is recognised for his elegant conducting style, searching musical intellect, and inspirational music-making. He is Founder and Principal Conductor of Aurora Orchestra, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, and has been Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony since 2021. He was Chief Conductor of the Residentie Orkest in Den Haag (latterly also Artistic Advisor) 2016-2021, and Principal Guest of the Gürzenich Orchester from 2017-2022.

Under his leadership the Finnish Radio Symphony has toured to the BBC Proms, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, and across Germany, and has been nominated for Orchestra of the Year 2025 by Gramophone. Their expanding discography together for Ondine includes Wennäkoski (Gramophone's Best Contemporary Recording Award 2023) and Sibelius (Record of the Month in August 2025 for the 5th Symphony). Their 2025/6 season features works by Lili Boulanger, Hans Abrahamsen and Hector Berlioz, with releases this season to include Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie* and Holst's *The Planets*.

Collon leads the Aurora Orchestra at the BBC Proms every year in their hugely popular memorised performances. Aurora are Resident at Kings Place and the Southbank Centre where they continue to reinvent the traditional concert format. They tour to major European venues and festivals every season, reviving their ground-breaking *Sacre du Printemps* production in Spring 2026, heading to Berlin, Munich, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Essen, Zurich, Bern and Geneva. They have recorded for Warner, winning the Echo Klassik Award for 'Klassik Ohne Grenzen' in 2015, and latterly for Deutsche Grammophon.

In 2025/26, Collon returns to conduct the Dresden Staatskapelle (televised live on ZDF), takes the Danish National to the Enescu Festival, and conducts the Swedish Radio Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony, and Dresden Philharmonic orchestras. Highlights last season included debuts with the Munich Philharmonic and San Francisco Symphony orchestras.

### **Kian Soltani**

Hailed by The Times as a “remarkable cellist” and described by Gramophone as “sheer perfection”, Kian Soltani’s playing is characterised by profound depth of expression, a sense of individuality and technical mastery.

The 25/26 season includes performances with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, a return to Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, as well as debuts with Orchestre National de France, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. Further highlights include European tour of WDR Sinfonieorchester and his residency with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. As an active recitalist, Soltani will tour Europe in trio with Renaud Capuçon and Mao Fujita, and in duo with Benjamin Grosvenor, while joining Andreas Ottensamer and Alessio Bax for performances across the United States.

In 2017, Soltani signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon, releasing his acclaimed debut album *Home* in 2018. He went on to record Dvořák’s Cello Concerto with the Staatskapelle Berlin and Daniel Barenboim in 2020 and released a Schumann album with Camerata Salzburg in 2024. His 2021 album *Cello Unlimited*, a solo exploration of the cello’s expressive range and cinematic power, earned him the Innovative Listening Experience Award at the 2022 Opus Klassik Awards.

Born in Bregenz, Austria, to a family of Persian musicians, Soltani began playing the cello at age four and was only twelve when he joined Ivan Monighetti’s class at the Basel Music Academy. He was the recipient of Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation scholarship in 2014 and completed further studies at the Kronberg Academy in Germany and International Music Academy in Liechtenstein. Kian Soltani plays “The London, ex Boccherini” Antonio Stradivari cello, kindly loaned to him by a generous sponsor through the Beares International Violin Society.

### **About the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**

Under the leadership of Music Director Nathalie Stutzmann, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) offers live performances, media initiatives, and learning programs that unite, educate and enrich our community through the engaging and transformative power of orchestral music experiences. The ASO engages the diverse international community of our city, bringing people

together in harmony—including our youngest citizens, with extensive opportunities for youth and families to experience the power of live orchestra music.

The Orchestra's range and depth are featured in more than 150 concerts each year, including the flagship Delta Classical Series, Movies in Concert, Family Concerts, Coca-Cola Holiday series, and many community and education concerts. In addition, the ASO presents many vibrant, wide-ranging events and artists through its Delta Atlanta Symphony Hall Live presentations. The ASO also performs regularly with the ASO Chorus, originally founded by Robert Shaw, and currently under the direction of Norman Mackenzie. The Chorus is featured on nine of the ASO's 27 GRAMMY® Award-winning recordings.

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