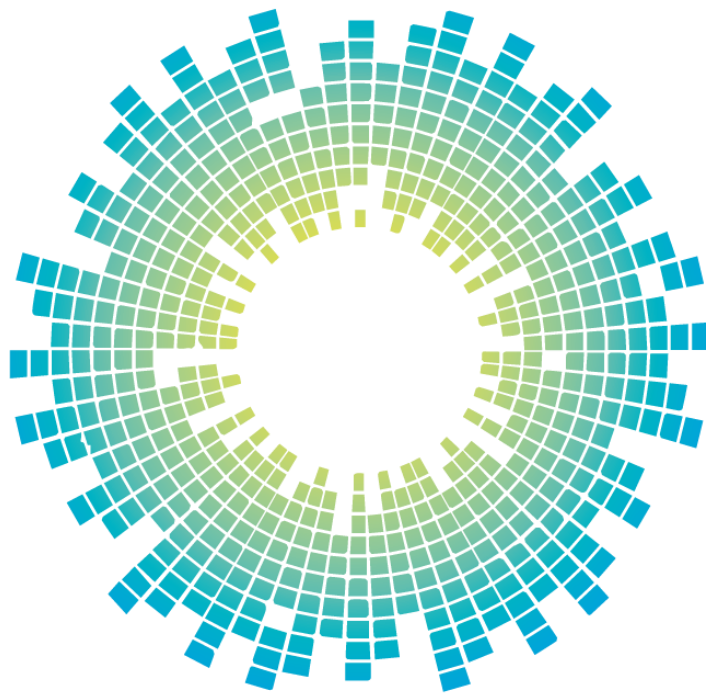




Commissioning Brief



Commissioning Brief No. 31234

The Radio 3 Feature

For BBC *Radio 3* for September 2026 -
September 2027

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SECTION A: EDITORIAL OPPORTUNITY

Commissioning Brief ID / Title: 31234: The Radio 3 Feature

Commissioning Editor	Matthew Dodd
Commissioning Contact	Matthew Dodd/David Ireland
Commissioning Brief Title	The Radio 3 Feature
Network	Radio 3
Guide Price	£9,500 - £11,500, dependent on amount of travel and other costs.
Genre	Factual – Arts, Culture and the Media
Duration	44'
No. of Episodes	c.26
Transmission Period	September 2026- September 2027
Slot Day	Sunday
Slot Time	1915-2000
Production Location	No restriction
Commissioning Round	2026/27 – Round 1 (Speech Programming)

Important Points to Note:

Short Proposals and your responses to the **Production Eligibility Questionnaire** must be submitted via PiCoS, **using Commissioning Brief 31234: The Radio 3 Feature, and Commissioning Round 1 2026/27**, before the deadline at **noon on Thursday 9th October 2025**.

- This title will be commissioned under the Audio Terms of Trade.
- Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the requirements contained in this document and on the commissioning website. Proposals not complying may be rejected by the Commissioners whose decision in this matter will be final.



The **Production Eligibility Questionnaire** can be found in **Appendix 1**. This is the first part of your submission and it will be considered as part of the process. Please only complete if you've not previously been commissioned by the network, otherwise enter "N/A".

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. About BBC Radio 3

BBC Radio 3 is the BBC's classical music station, also offering a range of broader cultural programming to entertain and absorb audiences. Classical music leads its daytime schedule, complemented by a host of live concerts and live performance every day. Alongside this are distinctive programmes on jazz, world music, as well as documentaries and speech programmes.

Network Editorial Strategy & Objectives

Cultural programming is a central part of Radio 3's mission.

- We believe classical music is for everyone. We aim to create an inclusive, welcoming space for all listeners that brings people together through shared experience and understanding, providing a place of inspiration, and a means to navigate a complex world.
- We pride ourselves on being a commissioner of distinctive classical music programmes, shining a new light on well-loved artistic works and investing in new talent.
- We are one of the most significant commissioners of contemporary classical music anywhere in the world and the biggest broadcaster of live classical concerts including the BBC Proms.

Diversity

Diversity & Inclusion is a priority for all of us. We want BBC Content to be demonstrably 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 through the BBC 50:50 initiative 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 part of 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. And contributing 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 proposal might contribute to the expanded 50/50 Diversity initiative and how your company already aligns with our D&I Commissioning Commitments, or could do so in future (See Appendix 1).

2. The Editorial Opportunity

Radio 3's documentary is a stand-out 45 minutes in the station's weekly programmes. A moment when the audience stops and pauses to be engrossed in a rich piece of storytelling about music and the arts.

We're looking for classical music stories with a difference – not only biographies of musicians but also imaginative, unconventional and unexpected treatments of individuals. We welcome feature ideas on the other genres of music, the arts, science and history, but primarily they should explore the way those subjects relate to music or are seen through music's perspective.

We are seeking programmes that achieve several of the following:

- Create gold-standard, in-depth documentaries about music and culture – of interest to all listeners, not just specialists
- Use human stories as an engrossing way to understand music
- Create original and surprising perspectives on a broad range of music and cultural issues
- Build intellectually stimulating treatments with sophisticated insight
- Act as a showcase for the skills of documentary-makers and BBC music stations, with award-winning programmes
- Offer a high-point for anniversaries and special seasons on BBC Radio 3

The Radio 3 Feature's Style

- Every programme should be an aural treat. Full of texture. Sophisticated mixes. Delightful scripting. Authoritative, but a pleasure to listen to, not just a source of information



- Presenters are rarely the key expert in their field. They have a different relationship with the topic. They should feel like they are sharing their experience, offering their enthusiasms and recommendations but not lecturing, and be responsive to guest contributors.
- Storytelling: The best programmes have been those that are built around a single strong story: with drama, intriguing characters, jeopardy, tension, emotional range, and make full use of the 44 minutes to take listeners on a multi-layered journey. Please avoid analytical overviews of a topic or surveys of a single theme.
- We are looking for rich treatments that get Radio 3 outside the studio and the concert hall and create a whole sound world for each programme: location recordings, personal testimony eye-witness accounts; archive, beautiful sound mixes – and more.
- Originality, surprise and relevance are vital. This is not the place on Radio 3 for the timeless history of composers or the textbook guide to art movements. We need to know what makes this idea stand out from the crowd and appeal now.
- The audience is broadly interested in music and the arts – but producers and presenters shouldn't presume any knowledge or be complacent about the audience's engagement. Each edition needs to be interesting by virtue of the actual programme and not assume the audience will stay listening because of the topic.
- Contributors to programmes should be diverse in background, age, voice and opinions. The best programmes avoid a plethora of interviews in the offices of experts.
- Every subject needs to be a rich seam for the programme to mine. It needs historical resonance and intellectual layers, and crucially to provide critical assessment, not storytelling alone. This is not the place for promoting this year's trends or subjects that run out of steam after 28 minutes.

The range of subjects that might be covered could include:

- Cultural biography. Programmes that put the case for re-appraising the life and work of musically influential individuals or groups of people from the recent and distant past. We are interested in (i) new perspectives on key figures – female and male - in music and the arts (ii) the story of less well-known composers or performers who deserve listeners' attention and who are now generating broader interest.
- We're always interested in programmes about twentieth-century figures; women and men from a range of backgrounds who have been overlooked, but whose significance is now coming into its own. These programmes often make great use of first-person testimony and audio archive
- Cultural journalism – we're looking for more up-to-date stories that reflect contemporary pre-occupations in classical music.



- Global musical culture – explored with insight and introducing us to influential people, places and movements around the world. We're keen for more ideas from outside Western Europe and America.
- The history of music and culture around the UK, away from more familiar centres of cultural activity. We're very keen to see more proposals in this category.
- Offbeat, quirky and unexpected features about a piece of music, a theme, or a work of art, with good reason to be re-appraised. We aim to be open-minded about opportunities so please do try things out on us! These can lead to some of the most memorable programmes in this slot.
- Musical anniversaries remain a key source of commissions – not just birth centenaries, but the anniversaries of first performances of classic works, publications, famous concerts etc.
- Strong series ideas, which will act as stand out moments on Radio 3. These will probably be 2 - 4 programmes and will usually mean one presenter across the whole series although different presenters bringing personal perspectives to a single theme might also be considered. We're looking for more ideas that have this sort of ambitious reach of subject. We welcome ideas which link a documentary to other parts of the Radio 3 schedule.

Recent Highlights

Listen to get a flavour of the kind of programmes we've been commissioning:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006tnwp>

Skid Row Messiah: Moving between contemporary LA and Handel's London, concert violinist Vijay Gupta tells the story of the annual Messiah performance in Skid Row and the story of Messiah itself. A group of homeless men and women - alongside professional musicians from the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Master Chorale - perform Messiah at the Midnight Mission. This feature follows the singers and players at this year's performance while exploring the composition and public history of Messiah itself.

Cathedral Music In Crisis: Eleanor Oldroyd investigates the major challenges facing some of Britain's most cherished and historic musical foundations, as the Cathedral Music Trust warns of a sustainability crisis for Britain's cathedral choirs. Eleanor travels to Sheffield to discover what happened after the controversial disbanding of their cathedral choir, and she visits other cities around the country to examine how different cathedral music teams are wrestling with dire financial pressures, falling recruitment and accusations of exclusivity.

Fauré and Me: Kathryn Stott celebrates the music of Gabriel Fauré, on the eve of the centenary of his death, and looks back on her career as she prepares to step down from the concert platform.



Wolf Hall - the Music: Composer Debbie Wiseman allows us access to the whole process of making a vital and engaging soundtrack for the new television series of Wolf Hall. She has allowed us to record every part of the process – from the very first experiments with phrases and themes in her home studio to discussions with series director Peter Kosminsky in ‘spotting sessions’ to match music and pictures. Along the way she has developed specific, subtle themes for the main characters and, most importantly, provided a soundtrack that reflects the mood of each scene and, vitally, the inner turmoils of Thomas Cromwell himself.

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau: Behind the Voice: For the 100th anniversary of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau’s birth, German baritone Benjamin Appl presents a personal tribute to his mentor and friend. He delves into previously unpublished letters and diaries to get behind the heroic figure and paint a complex portrait of Dieter through his inner thoughts and feelings, from his time fighting for the Nazi Regime to his symbolic performance in Britten’s War Requiem, and from the peak of his fame in the 1960s, 70s and 80s to his private life away from singing.

Anthony Minghella and Music: Juliet Stevenson, who worked with Oscar-winning director Anthony Minghella - most memorably in the film Truly, Madly, Deeply - charts how music shaped his life and career. "If my work has been to create words and images, my passion has always been music," Anthony told BBC Radio 3 listeners in 2003. Music flows through his work like a vital river, from his early radio plays through to films such as The English Patient and The Talented Mr Ripley.

Hepworth and the Cornish Landscape: Sculptor Barbara Hepworth’s intense relationship with Cornwall revealed, as two artists passionate about megalithic sites compare ancient stones and Hepworth’s figures in a landscape.

Afterwords: Anthony Burgess: An exploration of the artistic ambitions of the writer Anthony Burgess who was also, throughout his life, deeply engaged with music. As well as writing about music - most famously in A Clockwork Orange and his non-fiction book This Man and Music - there are over 300 works composed over a 50-year span, from preludes and fugues for keyboard via a 'flatulent fanfare' for four tubas (dedicated to an eminent - and scornful - music critic) to orchestral works.

Afterwords: Pauline Oliveros: 'Listen to everything all the time, and remind yourself when you’re not...' For her 21st birthday, Pauline Oliveros was given a tape recorder. It changed her life. She recorded sounds outside her window, then played the tape back, and heard things she hadn’t previously noticed. Thus began her philosophy of listening and sonic exploration.

Queer Gothic: From the Castle of Otranto to the first lesbian vampire, novelist Sarah Waters traces the queer roots of gothic literature and architecture in the 18th and early 19th century. Recorded on location at Strawberry Hill House in Twickenham.



Tango Goes East: Juliette Bretan traces the musical adventure of the tango and its interwar explosion eastwards in colder climes like Warsaw. A rich, unexpected history, encountering some of those who have brought it back to life. Tango was created by Argentina's immigrant communities in Buenos Aires & Montevideo to incite passion and musical obsession. But you could argue it got a compelling, if brief, makeover in the far less sunnier climes of Warsaw, Krakow, Berlin and Moscow.

Flamenco Is Like the Sun: Flamenco music has been a long-held passion of Robert Elms, BBC London presenter - from his early career as a columnist for The Face and NME to the present day. Robert first fell in love with the powerful Spanish art-form of flamenco through the recordings of legendary singer Camarón de la Isla, and by experiencing it live during his early visits to Spain, which for over twenty years he has counted as his second home. In this programme, Robert explores flamenco's complex history, and attempts to understand his deep emotional response to the music.

Erik Satie – The Minimalist Muse: Music journalist Jude Rogers uncovers how and why Erik Satie's music has posthumously influenced such an astonishing array of composers and musicians - not only from the classical world but genres like prog rock and synth-pop. And discovers why his work is so often seen as a precursor to ambient music, minimalism, film and advert music, conceptual art, and surrealism.

The February House: For a year during World War II, an unremarkable residence in Brooklyn Heights became the epicentre of Western music and literature. 7 Middagh Street was home to a list of luminaries: novelist Carson McCullers, burlesque dancer Gypsy Rose Lee, as well as three young Englishmen who'd emigrated to America as conflict blasted Europe - composer Benjamin Britten, tenor Peter Pears, and poet W.H. Auden. 85 years on, Gregory Woods rebuilds this ramshackle house share, and invite the walls to talk ...

Sound Sources: Elizabeth Alker talks to Paul McCartney, composer Jean-Michel Jarre and Sonic Youth guitarist Lee Renaldo on their debt to classical music. Some of the most important and genre defining movements in rock and pop have their roots in classical music's avant garde. And some of the most innovative songwriters and musicians are those who dig deep into the concert halls, conservatoires and rehearsal rooms for new ideas and techniques to push their own music even further.

The Hiawatha Phenomenon: Uchenna Ngwe uncovers the story of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's stratospheric concert hit, The Song of Hiawatha, 150 years after the composer's birth, examining how this now obscure cantata became one the most popular musical works of the early twentieth century. Uchenna's contributors help her evaluate how Hiawatha's Native American themes contributed to its enormous success, and the questions these now present for modern audiences



3. 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.

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](#).

4. Key Deliverables

Audio four weeks ahead of broadcast; Proteus description that is designed for BBC Sounds; readiness to co-operate with BBC Radio 3 Comms and Marketing teams.

Music is central to these programmes, and the proposals commissioned in this slot will need to align with the BBC's music policy guidelines for availability beyond 30 days on BBC Sounds, and potentially on the RSS feed. The policy is available here [Using Music in BBC Speech Audio Content](#). The commissioning editor is keen to ensure those music guidelines work effectively for your proposal, so please don't hold back or restrict the scope of any idea because you are uncertain of what can be achieved within them. If your short proposal is selected for development, the music element can then be discussed.

5. Success Measures

Clear audience impact; strong on-demand performance on BBC Sounds – particularly for over-45s; critical and press attention; Reinforcement of the Radio 3 Feature as an appointment to listen.

6. Compliance and 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 Thursday 9th October 2025.

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 scripts or samples can be in addition).

Step 3: Producers will be offered the opportunity to discuss the programme brief with Radio 3 Head of Speech 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 the Radio 3 Feature.

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

THE EVALUATION TEAM

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

Sam Jackson, Controller, Radio 3

Matthew Dodd, Head of Speech Programmes, Radio 3

David Ireland, Senior Planning Manager, Radio 3

Subject matter experts (e.g. production experts, network management, diversity, finance, etc.) may also be consulted.



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	Tuesday 2nd September 2025	Publication of commissioning brief documentation and round opens in PiCoS.
Commissioning Webinar	Friday 12th Sept 2025	An online briefing from commissioners (full details to follow)
Short Proposals and shortlisting	Noon on Thursday 9th October 2025	Deadline for Short Proposals to be submitted via PiCoS.
	Tuesday 4th November 2025	Suppliers shortlisted, notified of outcomes and asked to prepare Full Proposals.
Full Proposals and shortlisting	10th November – 5th December 2025	Opportunity to discuss commissioning brief with Commissioners prior to submitting Full Proposals.
	Noon on Tuesday 9th December 2025	Deadline for Full Proposals to be submitted via PiCoS. Evaluation panel shortlists Full Proposals.
Conditional Commissions offered	Late January 2026	Commissioning decisions made, subject to contract. Editorial specifications agreed. Feedback submitted on PiCoS.

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, please ensure you email them to david.ireland@bbc.co.uk by 3rd October 2025 at the latest.



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 two pages of your proposal (plus any supporting information).

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.

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. Please only complete it if you have not previously been commissioned by the network. Otherwise just insert “N/A”.

Once completed, please copy and paste your responses into the ‘**Production experience**’ section of the Create Proposal page in PiCoS (maximum 1,000 words).

Questionnaire

Part 1: Production Eligibility & Experience

Please outline your relevant production experience, using recent examples, in the following areas:

We require a production base with relevant experience and staffing depth in national radio production.

[Insert details]

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/on demand and social platforms.

[Insert details]

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

[Insert details]

Part 2: Partnerships

Complete Part 2 ONLY if you plan to submit a full proposal as part of a partnership.

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]



APPENDIX 2: Diversity & Inclusion

We want BBC Radio & 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](#).

