

'Virtual orchestra' hits high notes in London

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A visitor poses wearing a virtual-reality headset at the Southbank Centre in London experiencing a virtual view of the London Philharmonia Orchestra playing in the Royal Festival Hall

Music fans will be able to immerse themselves into the world of an orchestra thanks to a virtual reality experience launched in London on Friday.

Visitors to the Virtual Orchestra at the Southbank Centre can don [virtual reality headsets](#) and experience how it feels to be among the performers

as Esa-Pekka Salonen conducts the Philharmonia Orchestra in Sibelius's Fifth Symphony.

With the headsets they are transported backstage at London's Royal Festival Hall and then into the centre of an orchestral performance conducted by the Finnish maestro.

"You are sitting in the front row of the orchestra with the principal conductor Salonen conducting you," Luke Ritchie, the Philharmonia Orchestra's head of digital, told AFP.

"We wanted you to hear what it's like to sit in the viola section in the front of an orchestra, (for) people to get an insight of the dynamics."

Gillian Moore, director of music at the Southbank Centre, said she hoped the pre-recorded footage would open up people's enjoyment of classical music.

"This is all part of Southbank Centre's belief that everybody should have access to art and culture," she said.

"We're constantly trying to find new ways to do that, including the use of the latest technology."

The free experience runs at the Southbank Centre until October 2.

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