# Pro-Palestinian protesters disrupt Melbourne Symphony Orchestra at BBC Proms amid Gaza crisis



A performance by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO) at the BBC Proms in London was interrupted on Friday night by pro-Palestinian protesters, who caused a pause of more than ten minutes before the concert resumed. The demonstration took place in the upper gallery of the Royal Albert Hall, with protesters holding handwritten fabric signs denouncing the MSO and the BBC, accusing them of complicity in genocide and criticising their alleged Zionist funding and censorship amid the ongoing Gaza conflict.

The group Jewish Artists for Palestine, which identifies itself as comprising anti-Zionist Jewish writers, visual and performance artists, claimed responsibility for the disruption. They stated that the protest was a rejection of what they described as "Zionist funding, censorship and complicity in our cultural institutions" given the events in Gaza, highlighting specifically the MSO and the BBC. The MSO and the BBC were approached for comment; the BBC apologised for the disruption but noted that the incident was dealt with swiftly by the Royal Albert Hall’s security team.

The protest was broadcast live on BBC Radio 3, where announcer Ian Skelly narrated the events including the intervention of security to remove the demonstrators. During the disruption, the live broadcast was temporarily suspended and replaced with recorded classical music, as Sam Jackson, controller of BBC Radio 3 and BBC Proms, addressed the audience over the PA system. Audience members reported a mixed atmosphere, with the protesters facing strong disapproval and booing from other attendees.

Jewish Artists for Palestine also invoked the MSO's previous cancellation of a concert by pianist Jayson Gillham in Sydney last year—a decision linked to Gillham’s controversial comments supporting Gazans. The MSO later described the cancellation as a mistake. The protesters further criticised the MSO for its funding sources and referenced recent performances by the concert’s principal artist, Khatia Buniatishvili, with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, contributing to the complex backdrop of the protest.

The MSO has faced significant internal turmoil in recent months relating to these tensions. In August 2024, the orchestra’s musicians passed an overwhelming vote of no confidence in their managing director following the cancellation of Gillham’s performance, which was a response to his statements concerning the Gaza conflict. This controversy sparked wider unrest, including a postponement of shows by the band The Cat Empire with the MSO. In reaction, the MSO announced an independent review of its policies regarding such issues. Pianist Jayson Gillham himself commented after the cancellation, expressing gratitude for the support received and the attention brought to the plight of journalists killed in Gaza.

This incident is not without precedent at the BBC Proms. In 2011, a recital by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra was twice disrupted by pro-Palestinian demonstrators, who protested against what they described as the orchestra's complicity in Israel's human rights violations. More recently, in 2023, environmental activists from Just Stop Oil interrupted the First Night of the Proms, demonstrating the event’s history as a platform for political and social protest.

The ongoing violence in Gaza serves as the wider context for these disruptions. The Israeli military’s campaign in Gaza, launched in response to a deadly Hamas attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023, has resulted in over 63,000 deaths in Gaza, according to Hamas-run health authorities. The conflict has devastated the region’s infrastructure, leaving most of Gaza’s population displaced and vital services in ruin, with UN-backed experts confirming famine conditions in Gaza City. This backdrop of intense humanitarian crisis and political polarization undoubtedly fuels tensions spilling into cultural and public events worldwide, as reflected in the protests at the Royal Albert Hall.

Looking forward, the MSO is scheduled to return to the BBC Proms in 2025 under Chief Conductor Jaime Martín, featuring works by Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, and Australian composer Margaret Sutherland, with pianist Khatia Buniatishvili as soloist. This engagement marks a significant milestone in the orchestra’s international presence but will occur under the shadow of recent controversies, reflecting the ongoing intersection of art, politics, and public discourse in global cultural institutions.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.aol.com/bbc-proms-performance-interrupted-pro-222658372.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9uZXdzLmdvb2dsZS5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALthq1NGFsOvPfzBD8wa8prvCdhQIbuIp16OXR1zTqvI-E0iaZX91mbZ_IS4S1XgmcZBc5T29tE4fsmCqhbco5XvswrHnDGowU_T7qbcXUDEHY6DlVvIB1fAcNteOdIvUCAwF1dMZFPD1AgA3s3MJFxxmJKk5_8H-X57SQijDxpy&_guc_consent_skip=1756511977)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.aol.com/bbc-proms-performance-interrupted-pro-222658372.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9uZXdzLmdvb2dsZS5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALthq1NGFsOvPfzBD8wa8prvCdhQIbuIp16OXR1zTqvI-E0iaZX91mbZ_IS4S1XgmcZBc5T29tE4fsmCqhbco5XvswrHnDGowU_T7qbcXUDEHY6DlVvIB1fAcNteOdIvUCAwF1dMZFPD1AgA3s3MJFxxmJKk5_8H-X57SQijDxpy&_guc_consent_skip=1756511977)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.aol.com/bbc-proms-performance-interrupted-pro-222658372.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9uZXdzLmdvb2dsZS5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALthq1NGFsOvPfzBD8wa8prvCdhQIbuIp16OXR1zTqvI-E0iaZX91mbZ_IS4S1XgmcZBc5T29tE4fsmCqhbco5XvswrHnDGowU_T7qbcXUDEHY6DlVvIB1fAcNteOdIvUCAwF1dMZFPD1AgA3s3MJFxxmJKk5_8H-X57SQijDxpy&_guc_consent_skip=1756511977), [[2]](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-17/musicians-vote-no-condience-mso-gillham/104237004), [[5]](https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/08/21/wdgx-a21.html), [[6]](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-22/jayson-gillham-melbourne-symphony-orchestra-late-night-live/104255998)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-14756736), [[1]](https://www.aol.com/bbc-proms-performance-interrupted-pro-222658372.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9uZXdzLmdvb2dsZS5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALthq1NGFsOvPfzBD8wa8prvCdhQIbuIp16OXR1zTqvI-E0iaZX91mbZ_IS4S1XgmcZBc5T29tE4fsmCqhbco5XvswrHnDGowU_T7qbcXUDEHY6DlVvIB1fAcNteOdIvUCAwF1dMZFPD1AgA3s3MJFxxmJKk5_8H-X57SQijDxpy&_guc_consent_skip=1756511977)
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* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.aol.com/bbc-proms-performance-interrupted-pro-222658372.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9uZXdzLmdvb2dsZS5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALthq1NGFsOvPfzBD8wa8prvCdhQIbuIp16OXR1zTqvI-E0iaZX91mbZ_IS4S1XgmcZBc5T29tE4fsmCqhbco5XvswrHnDGowU_T7qbcXUDEHY6DlVvIB1fAcNteOdIvUCAwF1dMZFPD1AgA3s3MJFxxmJKk5_8H-X57SQijDxpy&_guc_consent_skip=1756511977)
* Paragraph 7 – [[4]](https://www.mso.com.au/media-centre/press-releases/2025-mso-announced-in-bbc-proms-2025-program), [[7]](https://www.mso.com.au/performance/2025-bbc-proms)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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1. <https://www.aol.com/bbc-proms-performance-interrupted-pro-222658372.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9uZXdzLmdvb2dsZS5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALthq1NGFsOvPfzBD8wa8prvCdhQIbuIp16OXR1zTqvI-E0iaZX91mbZ_IS4S1XgmcZBc5T29tE4fsmCqhbco5XvswrHnDGowU_T7qbcXUDEHY6DlVvIB1fAcNteOdIvUCAwF1dMZFPD1AgA3s3MJFxxmJKk5_8H-X57SQijDxpy&_guc_consent_skip=1756511977> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-17/musicians-vote-no-condience-mso-gillham/104237004> - In August 2024, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO) musicians passed an overwhelming vote of no confidence in the managing director following the cancellation of pianist Jayson Gillham's performance. The cancellation occurred after Gillham's comments about the Gaza conflict, leading to internal unrest and prompting The Cat Empire to postpone three shows with the MSO. The MSO announced an independent review into its policies in response to the controversy.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-14756736> - In 2011, pro-Palestinian protesters disrupted the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra's BBC Proms concert at London's Royal Albert Hall. Demonstrators shouted during the performance, leading to boos from the audience. The Palestine Solidarity Campaign had earlier called for a boycott of the concert, accusing the orchestra of complicity in whitewashing Israel's violations of international law and human rights.
4. <https://www.mso.com.au/media-centre/press-releases/2025-mso-announced-in-bbc-proms-2025-program> - The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO) was announced to perform at the BBC Proms in August 2025. Under Chief Conductor Jaime Martín, the MSO was set to showcase works by Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, and Australian composer Margaret Sutherland at London's Royal Albert Hall, marking a significant milestone in the orchestra's international presence.
5. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/08/21/wdgx-a21.html> - In August 2024, members of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra unanimously demanded the resignation of senior management over the cancellation of concerts by pianist Jayson Gillham. The cancellations followed Gillham's introduction of a piece dedicated to Palestinian journalists killed in Gaza, highlighting tensions between artistic expression and political controversy within the orchestra.
6. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-22/jayson-gillham-melbourne-symphony-orchestra-late-night-live/104255998> - Pianist Jayson Gillham spoke out after the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra cancelled his performance due to his comments on the killing of journalists in Gaza. Gillham expressed gratitude for the attention brought to the issue and received support from fellow musicians and the public, despite the MSO's initial decision to cancel the concert.
7. <https://www.mso.com.au/performance/2025-bbc-proms> - The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's performance at the BBC Proms in August 2025 featured acclaimed Georgian pianist Khatia Buniatishvili playing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1. The program also included Dvořák's Symphony No.6 and Margaret Sutherland's 'Haunted Hills,' showcasing the MSO's international collaboration and diverse repertoire.