

MUSIC CENTER  
**STRATHMORE**

---

*Strathmore  
Presents*

**George Hinchliffe's  
UKULELE ORCHESTRA  
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

**Peter Brooke Turner**

**Laura Currie**

**Dominic Howles**

**Leisa Rea**

**Ben Rouse**

**Chris Walker**

**Ewan Wardrop**

*Tuesday, May 2, 2023, 8pm*

---

## PROGRAM

*The program will be announced from the stage.*

*There will be a 20-minute intermission.*



### ABOUT THE UKULELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN

The Ukulele Orchestra is a touring musical group which has been delighting audiences, raising the roof, selling out performances, and receiving standing ovations since 1985. This all-singing, all strumming group has been performing for 38 years using only a fistful of ukuleles and maintaining that all genres of music are available for reinterpretation.

The premise sounds astoundingly simple: instruments, voices, no gimmicks, no light show. Yet *The New York Times* exclaim that “they extract more than seems humanly possible from so small and so modest an instrument.” Millions have been delighted over the years as the orchestra tears the house down with a lively, touching, catchy, emotive, stomping show, threaded with humour and wit which inexplicably draws the audience into a joyous world beyond the conflicts of musical genres, transcending differences between a serious concert and entertainment.

As soon as the performers walk on stage, the

audience feels that they are in safe hands, at home with friends who are totally in command of the art, craft, and magic of the stage. Sitting in chamber group format and dressed in formal evening wear (regardless of the time of day or the venue, whether Glastonbury Festival or Carnegie Hall), it uses the limitations of the instrument to create a musical freedom as it reveals unsuspected musical insights.

At this point, the audience may well sit back, all prior assumptions forgotten, and allow the Orchestra, which has 16-handedly changed the face of the ukulele world, to give what *The Independent* raved was “the best musical entertainment in the country.”

Their first gig, intended as a one-off bit of fun was an instant sell out and led to national radio, television appearances, album recordings, and international tours. Since then, the orchestra has become what *The Observer* called “a much-loved institution” giving thousands of concerts and making television and radio appearances all over the world. They have toured in Britain, across Europe, Scandinavia, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, China, the United States, Canada, and the North Pole. They also had the honour to perform, by invitation of The Prince of Wales, at the private 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday party of Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle.

The Ukulele Orchestra have released CDs and DVDs on their own independent label. The orchestra’s music has been used in films, plays, and commercials. *The Financial Times* praised “The sophisticated sound they make—both percussive and melodic—is at once hilarious and heartfelt.”

---

## ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

### PETER BROOKE TURNER

At more than two metres tall, Peter Brooke Turner may well be the tallest ukulele player in the world—he is certainly the tallest in the Ukulele Orchestra. He was born in Portugal and grew up in the Soviet Union, Brazil, America, Finland, and Italy. After false starts on the violin, trumpet, and guitar, he finally discovered the ukulele and joined the Ukes in 1995.

He has released three albums under his pseudonym Tony Penultimate and has worked with many well-known showbiz names in the United Kingdom. He has even lent his uke to Tiny Tim. He fronted his own Ukulele Kings rock group in the 1990s.

Peter has started the world's first high-altitude drama company—the Airline Toilets Theatre Company (ATTC) which has subsequently produced more than 20 high-quality, low-budget songs, sketches, and shows (all on Peter's iPhone) from this oft neglected performance area. They can be viewed online.

### LAURA CURRIE

The youngest member of the orchestra, Laura was born in Dumfries, Scotland, and studied English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. She started playing the ukulele at the age of 15 after seeing The Ukes in concert and used the instrument to front her first rock band at 16 years old. She began performing with The Ukes in 2019, and has since toured with them across China, France, and Switzerland.

When not touring with the orchestra, Laura performs under the solo stage name Ra. She writes and releases original songs and covers, and one of her collaborative singles was recently featured in a Netflix show.

Laura has garnered an active online following for her eclectic mix of elaborately self-produced

YouTube videos. During the COVID-19 lockdown in the United Kingdom, she used these video editing skills to produce *Ukulele Lockdown*, a series that The Ukes released weekly on Youtube. Laura also plays piano, bass, and guitar.

### DOMINIC HOWLES

Dominic grew up in Jamaica, Hong Kong, and Somerset. He is a very experienced bass player, using double bass and electric bass, and has worked with many well-known jazz names and in classical ensembles, including Tommy Chase, Stacey Kent, Bobby Wellins, Don Weller, Julian Siegel, and many others. He studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and has performed in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, as well as on television, the radio, and in the theatre. He has undertaken, directed, and written multi-media work, and is well-respected as a composer and arranger. His own groups have performed successfully for many years. He is a first-class bass soloist and has an engaging sense of humour, which is...ahem...always useful when working with ukulele players. He lives in London.

### LEISA REA

Leisa has a background in theatre, comedy, writing, and music. She's worked as an actor and director; written for stage, television, and radio; and has played with the orchestra for the past 15 years.

She's taught stand-up comedy, written for the BAFTA nominated series, *Miranda* (BBC), performed in her own critically acclaimed shows, and was the winner of the inaugural Musical Comedy Awards in 2009.

Away from orchestral duties, Leisa brings her considerable experience as a performer and artist to people all over the world through her online ukulele teaching and workshops.

Recently, Leisa won an Arts Council of England grant to allow her to train as an audio digital producer.

---

## BEN ROUSE

Ben was born in Cornwall, but grew up in Hampshire. At the age of eight he began playing the drums, turning to the guitar at age 11. At 23, Ben formed the rock band Purple Monkey, which became a popular along the South coast of England. At 25, he decided to learn the violin and mandolin and formed the folk duo, Teapot Junkies, releasing two albums of original material. He went on to teach himself the saxophone, flute, trumpet, and banjo.

At 30, Ben earned himself an HND in electronics, but in 2007 was drawn back to music when he saw the Ukulele Orchestra perform on *Jools Holland Hootenanny*. The next day he bought a ukulele and began performing and teaching workshops at festivals around the United Kingdom until he was invited to play with the Orchestra in 2014. He has since toured America, China, Europe, Scandinavia, and the United Kingdom with the group.

## EWAN WARDROP

Ewan started playing the ukulele in 1998, but also plays the mandolin, guitar, and penny whistle. Ewan trained as a ballet dancer and appeared in a record-breaking run of Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* on Broadway. He has a long history of working in theatre on an international stage, and has worked with companies such as the The Royal Shakespeare Company and Kneehigh Theatre. He also has an experimental Morris Dance group called the Bo Diddlers.

## CHRIS WALKER

Chris studied drama originally, but has worked as a musician for many years, including giving a huge number of performances with his own skiffle group. He is an experienced ukuleleator, singer, raconteur, administrator, and tea-chest bass player. Chris's experience in theatre and in venues of a bewildering variety means that he is comfortable bringing both a seriousness and a devil-may-care lightheartedness to performances with the orchestra. Chris has performed on radio and television, at the Cambridge Folk Festival, Singapore International Arts Festival, Glastonbury Festival, Linz International Street Festival, and many other venues in the United Kingdom and Europe. He lives in Cardiff, in Wales, which, usefully for the orchestra, and like Scotland, is still part of the United Kingdom and Great Britain.

## STAFF

Musical Director: George Hinchliffe

Tour Management: Viola Farrington

Sound: Verena Rogler