

St  
Martin  
in  
the  
Fields

# FRESH HORIZONS

## *St Martin's Players: The Golden Age of Jazz*

*St Martin's Players*

*Iain Farrington Piano/Arranger*

*Andrew Earis Conductor*

*Available to watch as many times as you like  
from 7.30pm, Thursday 11 February 2021,  
and available for 30 days.*

*St Martin-in-the-Fields  
Trafalgar Square  
London  
WC2N 4JJ  
020 7766 1100  
[www.smitf.org](http://www.smitf.org)*

# FRESH HORIZONS



## PROGRAMME

Appalachian Spring - Suite for 13 instruments (1970) – Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Rhapsody in Blue – George Gershwin (1898-1937)  
arr. Iain Farrington (b.1977)

Movements from 'Jazz Suite' – Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)  
arr. Iain Farrington

*i. March*

*ii. Polka*

*iii. Foxtrot*

*iv. Waltz No 2*

*v. Dance No 1*

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## PROGRAMME NOTES

by Sarah Maxted

As three distinctive figures in twentieth century music, Copland, Gershwin and Shostakovich have more in common than might be assumed. They each began their musical studies as pianists, each was of Russian heritage (both Gershwin's and Copland's fathers had emigrated from Russia, adapting their family names from Gershowitz and Kaplan respectively), each had formative experiences writing music for stage and screen, and each worked to bridge the widening gap between commercial and art music. Most significantly, all three composers strove to use their unique musical styles to capture the spirit of their age, in a way that was both popular and meaningful.

Aaron Copland (1900-1990) is remembered as a quintessentially American composer. He was born in Brooklyn, New York, and began his musical education at a young age, composing his first songs when he was eight. Copland took lessons from Rubin Goldmark (who also taught Gershwin for a brief period) and then studied with Nadia Boulanger for three years, benefitting hugely from her instruction as well as from the thrumming cultural atmosphere of 1920s Paris. After returning to New York, he quickly established himself in the city's musical heart as composer, critic and lecturer. In the 1930s he was influenced by the German idea of *Gebrauchsmusik* ('music for use') and began to compose in an increasingly accessible 'vernacular' style, writing for young audiences, film and radio. He found inspiration in jazz, Latin and American folk tunes, and later experimented with Arnold Schoenberg's twelve-tone system. Despite being insatiably curious and always intellectually abreast of developments in the musical avant-garde, Copland remains best-known for his more populist works evoking the pioneering spirit and vast landscapes of America.



Aaron Copland (c. Library of Congress Archives)

*Appalachian Spring* was first conceived as a ballet with 'an American theme' for celebrated modern dancer Martha Graham. Copland's working title was simply '*Ballet for Martha*', until shortly before its premiere at the Library of Congress in 1944 when Graham suggested titling the ballet after a quote from a poem *The Dance* by American modernist Hart Crane:

*O Appalachian Spring! I gained the ledge;  
Steep, inaccessible smile that eastward bends  
And northward reaches in that violet wedge  
Of Adirondacks!*

The plot of the ballet focuses on a young pioneer couple in the nineteenth century, establishing a life together and homesteading in the wilderness. Combining the talents of Copland and Graham, the premiere was a great success and the ballet was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1945. Musically, *Appalachian Spring* showcases the elements that have come to define Copland's style: simplicity, songfulness (including his use of the Shaker melody *Simple Gifts*), jaunty rhythmic motifs, and the broad sonority of wide-open spaces.

George Gershwin (1898-1937) was an icon of Broadway song-writing, equally famed for his orchestral works and the opera *Porgy and Bess*. Born and raised in Brooklyn, Gershwin

George Gershwin (c. Getty images)



started his musical career recording player piano rolls and 'plugging' songs for a music-publishing firm. From his first big success with the song *Swanee* in 1919, Gershwin went on to write a catalogue of smash-hits, often in collaboration with his older brother Ira as lyricist. As Gershwin developed his signature style, he sought instruction and – like Copland – applied to study with Boulanger in Paris in the mid-1920s. However, his application was

rejected on the basis that formal classical study could interfere with his jazz-influenced genius. Composer Maurice Ravel expressed this sentiment in a letter to Boulanger: "There is a musician here endowed with the most brilliant, most enchanting and perhaps the most profound talent: George Gershwin. His worldwide success no longer satisfies him, for he is aiming higher. He knows that he lacks the technical means to achieve his goal. In teaching him those means, one might ruin his talent."

***Rhapsody in Blue*** premiered in a 1924 concert entitled 'An Experiment in Modern Music', organised by bandleader Paul Whiteman. Whiteman had publicised the upcoming concert in the New York Tribune, advertising a new 'jazz concerto' composed by Gershwin. The only snag was that this report was, apparently, the first Gershwin had heard of the commission! He rose to the challenge and inspiration struck during a train journey to Boston, when the train's "steely rhythms" prompted Gershwin to envision the work in its entirety "as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America - of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our blues, our metropolitan madness." Using the rhapsody form Gershwin could flow freely between musical ideas, incorporating his trademark spiky syncopations and sultry melodies. The title *Rhapsody in Blue* was a suggestion from his brother Ira, inspired by an exhibition of James McNeill Whistler paintings with titles such as *Arrangement in Grey and Black*. Naming Gershwin's rhapsody this way referenced its jazz and blues influences, but also subtly channelled the high-brow language of the visual arts, elevating the work as art music.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) was born in Saint Petersburg and, after showing prodigious talent in piano lessons with his mother, was enrolled at the Petrograd Conservatory aged just thirteen. During his studies he was influenced by the works of Stravinsky and Prokofiev and his compositions often featured elements of the grotesque, in the Russian tradition of nineteenth



Dmitri Shostakovich (c. Alamy)

century novelist Gogol. This suited his earliest professional endeavours playing for silent movies, improvising skilfully to brusque changes of cinematic mood. Shostakovich's successful early compositions, including his first symphony in 1926, propelled him into the public eye and political scrutiny. When his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* was scathingly reviewed in Pravda, the official newspaper of the Soviet Union, it was the start of a precarious cycle of denunciation and rehabilitation. At times, his music was lauded and championed, but at other times Joseph Stalin and the Communist Party denounced Shostakovich's works as a 'formalist', endangering not only his career but his life. This held Shostakovich in an anxious equilibrium between conservative and experimental music, balancing his artistic integrity with his survival, creating masterpieces along the way.

Shostakovich's ***Jazz Suites*** were written for popular appeal in the dance halls of the Soviet Union and brim with playfulness and bittersweet humour. This arrangement by Iain Farrington combines movements from the 1934 *Jazz Suite No 1* with the later *Suite for Variety Orchestra/Jazz Suite No 2*. The lively *Polka* and seductively bluesy *Foxtrot* are from the 1934 suite. The second suite is represented with the *March, Dance No 1* and the instantly recognisable *Waltz No 2*, with its haunting melody that has been immortalised in Stanley Kubrick's film *Eyes Wide Shut* and countless TV shows and adverts.



St Martin's Players, with Iain Farrington

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## PERFORMERS

**St Martin's Players**  
**Piano/Arranger** Iain Farrington  
**Conductor** Andrew Earis

### *St Martin's Players*

#### **Violin I**

Richard Milone  
Shlomy Dobrinsky

#### **Violin II**

Hilaryjane Parker  
Eleanor Parry-Dickinson

#### **Viola**

Matthew Quenby  
Nick Barr

#### **Cello**

Adrian Bradbury  
Alexandra MacKenzie

#### **Doublebass**

Jan Zahourek

#### **Flute/Piccolo**

Anne Allen

#### **Oboe**

Lydia Griffiths

#### **Clarinet**

Andrew Harper

#### **Alto Saxophone**

Andrew Harper

#### **Bassoon**

Dominic Tyler

#### **Horn**

James Pillai

#### **Trumpet**

Imogen Whitehead

#### **Trombone**

Rupert Whitehead

#### **Percussion**

Tristan Fry

#### **Timpani**

Julian Poole

**St Martin's Players** is a newly established ensemble bringing together some of London's finest musicians for concerts and broadcasts from St Martin-in-the-Fields, in the heart of the city. Since their premiere performances for the Sound of St Martin's inaugural Summer Online Festival in 2020, St Martin's Players have delighted audiences with their versatility and flair in programmes ranging from Haydn's *Nelson Mass* to Copland's *Appalachian Spring*. Through these performances, they have played a key role in the reimagining of concerts from St Martin's during the period of Covid-19 and lockdown, bringing digital engagement to the fore and championing creative programming and fresh musical arrangements.

Highlights have included concerts in collaboration with renowned broadcaster and author Zeb Soanes, as well as recording the Christmas Morning broadcast for BBC Radio 4 in December 2020. St Martin's Players also perform regularly in close partnership with St Martin's Voices, infusing larger scale choral works with chamber music vibrancy, including a special performance of Vivaldi's *Gloria* in its original arrangement for upper voices

Iain Farrington



**Iain Farrington** has an exceptionally busy and diverse career as a pianist, organist, composer and arranger. He studied at the Royal Academy of Music, London and at Cambridge University.

He has made numerous recordings, and has broadcast on BBC Television, Classic FM and BBC Radio 3. As a solo pianist, accompanist, chamber musician and organist, Iain has performed at all the major UK venues and abroad in the USA, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, Malaysia, Hong Kong and all across Europe. He has worked with many of the country's leading musicians, including Paul McCartney, Willard White and Bryn Terfel.

Iain played the piano at the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics with Rowan Atkinson, the London Symphony Orchestra and Sir Simon Rattle. In 2018 he performed his solo piano arrangements of Mahler's symphonies in a concert series in London. Iain has composed orchestral, choral and instrumental pieces and has arranged hundreds of works in many styles, including opera, orchestral, choral, African songs, cabaret, klezmer, jazz and pop. Iain has composed numerous works for the BBC Proms, including *Beethoveniana* in 2020, a song for the CBeebies Prom in 2019, *Gershwinicity* in 2018, *A Shipshape Shindig* in 2017, and two works for the Wallace and Gromit Prom in 2012. His chamber orchestrations of the symphonic repertoire are regularly performed around the world and his organ arrangement of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No 5* was performed at the Royal Wedding in 2011.

He is the Arranger in Residence for Aurora Orchestra.

**Andrew Earis** is Director of Music at St Martin-in-the-Fields where he oversees the music programme at this busy London church. Andrew is a graduate of the Royal College of Music and Imperial College, London, and holds a PhD from the University of Manchester.



Andrew Earis

Recent performances include Mozart's *Mass in C Minor* with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and Beethoven *Mass in C* with Southbank Sinfonia. He has given organ recitals in venues including King's College Chapel, Cambridge, Westminster Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and Washington National Cathedral, and has performed as soloist in performances of Poulenc's *Organ Concerto* and Saint-Saëns' *Organ Symphony*.

In addition to his duties at St Martin's, Andrew is a regular contributor to BBC Radio's religious output as a producer of programmes including Radio 4 Sunday Worship and Radio 3 Choral Evensong.

*Our thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, for supporting the Fresh Horizons concert series at St Martin-in-the-Fields.*

*This concert was pre-recorded in the church and edited together before broadcast. The performers and technical crew carefully adhere to all current government regulations for COVID-19.*



St Martin-in-the-Fields (c. Matt Chung)



# FRESH HORIZONS

Other concerts in the **Fresh Horizons series:**

**London Mozart Players:**

**Four World Seasons**

Thursday 28 January, 7.30pm

**Stile Antico: Josquin -**

**Father of the Renaissance**

Thursday 4 February, 7.30pm

**Stile Antico: A Garden of Delights**

Thursday 18 February, 7.30pm

**London Mozart Players:**

**Beethoven Violin Concerto**

Thursday 25 February, 7.30pm

**Stile Antico: Toward the Dawn**

Thursday 4 March, 7.30pm

**Academy of St Martin in the Fields:**

**Bach and Brahms**

Thursday 11 March, 7.30pm

**Peter Donohoe**

Thursday 18 March, 7.30pm

**Piatti Quartet**

Thursday 25 March, 7.30pm

**Stainer – The Crucifixion**

Thursday 1 April, 7.30pm

**Handel – Messiah**

Thursday 8 April, 7.30pm

**The Gesualdo Six**

Thursday 15 April, 7.30pm

**Academy of St Martin in the Fields**

**with John Butt**

Thursday 22 April, 7.30pm

**Chineke! Chamber Ensemble**

Thursday 29 April, 7.30pm

*All concerts are available to watch for 30 days after their release date*

Don't miss your chance to **purchase a season ticket** for all 14 concerts in the series and get 30% off – book by Thursday 25 February to save over £40!

As the impact of COVID-19 continues, we need people like you to keep supporting us and helping the musicians we work with.

To help us keep playing on, please consider making a donation today:

[www.smitf.org/donate](http://www.smitf.org/donate)

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