

St
Martin
in
the
Fields




FRESH HORIZONS

*London Mozart Players:
Beethoven Violin Concerto*

*London Mozart Players
Jonian Ilias Kadesha Soloist
Simon Blendis Director*

*Available to watch as many times as you like
from 7.30pm, Thursday 25 February 2021,
and available for 30 days.*

St Martin-in-the-Fields
Trafalgar Square
London
WC2N 4JJ
020 7766 1100
www.smitf.org



FRESH HORIZONS

PROGRAMME

Simple Symphony – Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Concerto for Violin in D – Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)



London Mozart Players (c. Kevin Day)

FRESH HORIZONS

PROGRAMME NOTES

by Sarah Maxted

Born in the Suffolk coastal town of Lowestoft, Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) showed early signs of musical brilliance and made his first attempts at composition when he was just five. He took lessons in piano and viola, attended symphony concerts in Norwich, and went about his schooldays with a love of cricket and mathematics, all the while nurturing his remarkable habit of composing prodigiously in his spare time. As a fourteen-year-old he met composer Frank Bridge, whose orchestral work *The Sea* had created a lasting impression on him a few years earlier. Britten began travelling regularly to London for composition lessons in which Bridge helped hone his natural ability into a more rigorous technical craft. Within two years, Britten won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music to continue his studies under the tutelage of John Ireland. He won many student prizes and his early professional works, including the 1932 *Sinfonietta* and 1933 choral variations *A Boy Was Born*, attracted the wide attention of the London music scene.



Benjamin Britten (c. Getty images)

The *Simple Symphony* was composed during a period in Lowestoft after the completion of Britten's studies, between December 1933 and February 1934. It can be seen as a fond farewell to the music of his childhood, based on eight themes found in songs and piano pieces from his vast catalogue of juvenilia. The dedication was to Audrey Alston, Britten's childhood viola teacher who had also made the formative introduction to Frank Bridge. The work had its premiere in Norwich in 1934, with Britten conducting an amateur string orchestra.

The first movement *Boisterous Bourrée* combines themes from Britten's 1925 piano Suite No 1 and a 1923 song setting of text from Alfred Lord Tennyson's *The Foresters*. A bourrée is a Baroque dance form of French origin, usually defined as a duple-metre dance with dactylic (long-short-short) rhythm, as can be heard in Britten's principal melody here with its slur-staccato-staccato rhythmic motif.

With the performance direction 'presto possibile' ('as fast as possible') the second movement *Playful Pizzicato* is a joyous exercise in pizzicato (plucked) string technique. Based on themes from a 1924 piano scherzo and a Rudyard Kipling song setting, the bucolic middle section will sound familiar to fans of BBC Radio 4's *The Archers*, echoing the 'Barwick Green' maypole dance of its theme music.

In the third movement *Sentimental Sarabande* we hear hints of the lyricism and reserved sentimentality to come in Britten's mature style. Again, Britten was inspired by Baroque dance forms, with a sarabande typically being the third of four movements in a suite of courtly dance music. The two themes are from the 1925 piano *Suite No 3* and a 1923 piano waltz.

The *Frolicsome Finale* incorporates themes from a 1926 piano sonata and 1925 song, concluding the work with fiery exuberance. Altogether, the Simple Symphony is a wonderful testament both to the relentless musical fertility of Britten's childhood mind and his evolution into an accomplished young composer of great virtuosity.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was born in Bonn, then the capital of the Electorate of Cologne, where he received his early musical education and published some of his first piano compositions. He moved to Vienna in 1792 and furthered his studies with composers including Franz Joseph Haydn and Antonio Salieri, whilst rapidly gaining a reputation as a virtuoso pianist. He continued to write extensively during this period of professional development, which led to publication of his first six string quartets and the premiere of his first major orchestral work, the *First Symphony* in 1800. By this time, Beethoven's hearing was already declining (he would famously become almost totally deaf in the next decade or so) but the advancement of his influential 'heroic' composition style was only just beginning. Through his orchestral masterpieces he extended the inherited musical language of the classical period towards the expressive new possibilities of the Romantic era.



Ludwig-van-Beethoven (c. University History Archive)

Despite Beethoven's stylistic prowess in his five piano concertos, the ***Violin Concerto in D*** is his only surviving completed concerto for another instrument. It was premiered in 1806 by Franz Clement, but did not gain momentum in concert repertory until an 1844 performance in London with Felix Mendelssohn conducting and the twelve-year-old prodigy Joseph Joachim as soloist. The work became a star vehicle for the young player and consequently become increasingly recognised as an indispensable piece of violin concerto repertoire.

The *Allegro ma non troppo* first movement begins with ominous timpani and woodwind sweetness, establishing the yearning melodic themes and pulsing crotchet ostinato that characterise this expansive movement. There are three full minutes of orchestral music before the solo violin makes its graceful first entrance with quasi-improvisational stylings, exploring the full chromatic potential of the principal melodies. The cadenza by Alfred Schnittke (1934-1998) illuminates the work with twentieth-century fireworks, after which the solo violin takes up the original theme in breath-taking simplicity and leads the movement from nostalgia to grandeur in its climax.

The *Larghetto* second movement brings serenity and gentle harmonic stability. The tutti passages are sonorous and elegant, whilst the violin solo is luminous in high-register lyricism, punctuated by the poised accompaniment of clarinets and bassoons.

A rallying chordal finish and short cadenza lead directly into the high-spirited dance of the final movement, a nimble *Rondo*. The movement shifts between variation and invention, finding a distinctively melancholy middle passage with a lilting melody shared beautifully between the solo violin and bassoon. The rondo theme returns delicately, meandering through harmonic change and ornamentation towards another polystylistic Schnittke cadenza. From Schnittke's eerie and inquisitive exploration, the tutti strings guide us back into familiar pastoral terrain and the inevitable rollicking finale.



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PERFORMERS

London Mozart Players
Jonian Ilias Kadesha Soloist
Simon Blendis Director

Violin I

Simon Blendis
Sijie Chen
Nicoline Kraamwinkel
Ann Criscuolo
Martin Smith

Viola

Judith Busbridge
Bryony Gibson-Cornish
Michael Posner

Flute

Ileana Ruhemann

Clarinet

Nicholas Carpenter
Lewis Graham

Horn

Stephen Stirling
Martin Grainger

Timpani

Benedict Hoffnung

Violin II

Jennifer Godson
Antonia Kesel
Gemma Sharples
Clare Hayes

Cello

Sebastian Comberti
Julia Desbruslais

Double bass

Benjamin Russell

Oboe

Gareth Hulse
Katie Clemmow

Bassoon

Jonathan Davies
Emma Harding

Trumpet

Neil Brough
Peter Wright



LONDON MOZART PLAYERS

The **London Mozart Players**, the UK's longest established chamber orchestra, was founded to delight audiences with the works of Mozart and Haydn. Since 1949, the LMP has developed a reputation for adventurous, ambitious programming from Baroque through to genre-crossing contemporary music, and continues to build on its association with many of the world's finest artists including Dame Jane Glover, Howard Shelley, Nicola Benedetti and Simon Callow. The orchestra enjoys an international reputation, touring in Europe and the Far East, and records frequently for Naxos, Convivium, Chandos and Hyperion Records.

The LMP performs regularly on London's concert platforms, including the Royal Festival Hall, St John's Smith Square and Cadogan Hall, as well as cathedrals and venues across the UK. The resident orchestra at Croydon's Fairfield Halls, LMP plays an important part in the borough's cultural life. LMP recently relocated its office to St John the Evangelist, SE19, undertaking an award-winning programme of initiatives within the community, including family concerts and collaborations with local schools.

As a pioneer of orchestral outreach work, LMP collaborates regularly with schools and music hubs across the UK and abroad to inspire the next generation of musicians and music lovers. LMP continues its 72-year tradition of promoting young talent: Nicola Benedetti, Jacqueline du Pré and Jan Pascal Tortelier are just three of many young musical virtuosi championed early in their careers by the orchestra.

LMP is the only UK professional orchestra to be managed operationally and artistically by the players. The orchestra has enjoyed the patronage of HRH The Earl of Wessex since 1988.



Jonian Ilias Kadesha (c. Kaupo Kikkas)

Over the last year **Jonian Ilias Kadesha** has appeared as soloist with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe conducted by Sir András Schiff at the Kronberg Festival, the Athens State Symphony at Megaron Hall and Scottish Chamber Orchestra at Tivoli Hall.

He gave a recital at Wigmore Hall and made his debut at the Konzerthaus Berlin as soloist and artistic director of the Caerus Kammerensemble.

Festival appearances included the Resonances (Belgium), Lockenhaus (Switzerland) and Schubertiade (Austria), collaborating with Nicolas Altstaedt, Steven Isserlis, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Antje Weithaas and Denes Varjon, among many others.

Highlights this season include a performance of Shostakovich's *Concerto No 2* with the Athens State Symphony, and solo appearances with the Macedonian Philharmonic Orchestra, London Mozart Players and Meininger Hofkapelle.

He gives a series of streamed concerts with Barnábus Kelemen and Friends at the Liszt Academy and Budapest Spring Festival, and returns to Wigmore Hall with Stephen Isserlis and Trio Gaspard. In summer 2021 he will be Artist in Residence at the Boswiler Sommer Festival.

Jonian has performed widely in Europe including the Handelsbeurs Concertzaal, the Louvre in Paris, Berlin Philharmonie, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Progetto Martha Argerich, Heidelberger-Frühling, Musikdorf-Ernen, Hitzacker and Mantua Chamber Music Festivals. He has taken part in Open Chamber Music at IMS Prussia Cove, Chamber Music Connects the World at Kronberg Academy and the Verbier Academy Festival.

Born in Athens, of Albanian and Greek heritage, in 2020 Jonian completed his Masters at the Kronberg Academy with Antje Weithaas. In 2018 he was a prize-winner at the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) International Auditions held at Wigmore Hall.

Jonian plays on Nicola Gagliano violin (18th century), kindly on loan from the Deutsche Stiftung Musikleben in Hamburg.



Jonian Ilias Kadesha with London Mozart Players (c. St Martin-in-the-Fields)

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.

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

St Martin's Players:

The Golden Age of Jazz

Thursday 11 February, 7.30pm

Stile Antico: A Garden of Delights

Thursday 18 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

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

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