

Press Release  
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## BRITTEN SINFONIA – SPRING CONCERTS/PRODUCTIONS

### MARCH – MAY 2016

Britten Sinfonia celebrates spring with new commissions from **Bryce Dessner** and **Elena Langer**, Mozart directed by pianist **Benjamin Grosvenor**, a wander through a winter landscape with **Ian Bostridge**, and a plate smashing frenzy courtesy of **Gerald Barry**.

Concerts/productions in March, April and May include:

- **Easter concerts:** James MacMillan's *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, in Birmingham, Cambridge and Barbican, London (20, 23 & 25 March)
- A revival of Ramin Gray's Royal Opera House production of **Gerald Barry's** Grammy-nominated and RPS Music Award-winning opera, *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the Barbican Theatre (29 March - 3 April)
- **Benjamin Grosvenor directs...** the outstanding young pianist in Mozart's final piano concerto, in a concert that also marks Britten Sinfonia Leader **Jacqueline Shave's** first decade with the orchestra, and features the premiere of *The Story of an Impossible Love* by **Elena Langer**. (Bradford upon Avon, Norwich, Cambridge and Milton Court Concert Hall, London, 23, 27, 29 April and 1 May)
- A lunchtime concert tour, featuring a new piano quartet by American composer **Bryce Dessner** of cult band, The National and Schumann's *Piano Quartet in E flat major* (Norwich, Cambridge and Wigmore Hall, London – 8, 12 and 13 April)
- **The Dark Mirror: Zender's Wintereisse**, with **Ian Bostridge**. Directed and designed by **Netia Jones**; conducted by **Baldur Brönnimann**. (Barbican Theatre, 12-14 May)
- As a prelude to Britten Sinfonia's new residency at Saffron Hall (which begins in Autumn 2016), harpsichordist **Mahan Esfahani** and mezzo-soprano **Alice Coote** join the orchestra for a programme of Handel, Bach and Britten's *Phaedra* (15 May)

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For further details, and booking information for all concerts/venues visit:  
[www.brittensinfonia.com](http://www.brittensinfonia.com)

Britten Sinfonia is an Associate Ensemble at the Barbican.

## THE CONCERTS

### **Britten Sinfonia and Britten Sinfonia Voices at Easter** **James MacMillan: *Seven Last Words from the Cross***

**Sunday 20 March, Birmingham Town Hall at 3.00pm**  
**Wednesday 23 March at 7.30pm, Kings College Chapel, Cambridge**  
**Good Friday, 25 March at 6.00pm, Barbican Hall, London**

**Britten Sinfonia** brings a contemplative feel to Easter 2016, with a short concert tour featuring four centuries of exquisite music, with **James MacMillan's** dramatic meditation on Christ's final words, *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, at its heart. Featuring **Britten Sinfonia** and its acclaimed choir, **Britten Sinfonia Voices**, conducted by **Eamonn Dougan**, the concert also includes **Byrd's** melancholic *Miserere Mei*, **JS Bach's** grave-side Cantata "*O Jesu Christ, mein's Leben Licht*" and **Barshai's** orchestral arrangement of **Shostakovich's** searing eighth string quartet, written in response to the post-war destruction of Dresden and "*dedicated to the Memory of Victims of Fascism*".

### **Gerald Barry: *The Importance of Being Earnest***

**29 March – 3 April, Barbican Theatre**

**Ramin Gray's** modern-dress production for the Royal Opera House is revived at the Barbican Theatre, giddy with cucumber sandwiches, smashed plates, megaphones and high-octane comedy. **Tim Murray** conducts Britten Sinfonia and a cast including **Alan Ewing** as Lady Bracknell, in Gerald Barry's fabulous kaleidoscope of music and manners.

*Presented by the Barbican.*

### **Britten Sinfonia at Lunch...** **Bryce Dessner premiere**

**Friday 8 April at 1pm, St Andrew's Hall, Norwich**  
**Tuesday 12 April at 1pm, West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge**  
**Wednesday 13 April at 1pm, Wigmore Hall, London**

A new piano quartet by American composer **Bryce Dessner** (guitarist of Grammy-nominated band The National) provides lunchtime food for thought, in a programme that also includes a selection of Bartok's folklore-inspired **Duos**, and **Schumann's *Piano Quartet***.

**Britten Sinfonia At Lunch**, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this season, provides meaty musical fare, spicing up traditionally safe daytime musical offerings with new works, and invigorating, thought-provoking chamber music from across the centuries. In the first decade of the series, Britten Sinfonia has commissioned and premiered more than 45 new works.

The series features Britten Sinfonia's outstanding players in intimate chamber concerts lasting an hour. This concert features Britten Sinfonia principals **Thomas Gould** (violin) **Clare Finnimore** (viola), **Caroline Dearnley** (cello) and **Huw Wakins** (piano)

**Benjamin Grosvenor directs...**  
**Ten years of Jacqueline Shave/Elena Langer world premiere**

**Saturday 23 April, Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford Upon Avon**  
**Wednesday 27 April, West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge**  
**Friday 29 April, St Andrew's Hall, Norwich**  
**Sunday 1 May, Milton Court Concert Hall, London**

In a long list of outstanding young composers and musicians to have worked with Britten Sinfonia, few come with a higher pedigree than pianist **Benjamin Grosvenor**. Still only 23 years old, he makes his Britten Sinfonia debut, directing from the keyboard Mozart's last *Piano Concerto No. 27*. The concert also features a new William Alwyn Foundation commission, *The Story of an Impossible Love* for chamber orchestra by **Elena Langer**, (fresh from the success of her new opera for Welsh National Opera, *Figaro Gets A Divorce*). And it marks Britten Sinfonia's charismatic leader, **Jacqueline Shave's** first decade with the orchestra. Britten Sinfonia Chief Executive David Butcher comments:

*"Britten Sinfonia doesn't have a principal conductor or music director; the orchestra's leader therefore has a pivotal role. As an exceptional chamber musician, Jackie is at the musical heart of the orchestra. She sets the bar very high, and as with all our players, and guest artists, is driven by a desire for musical adventure and discovery, and crucially, enjoyment. I'd like to wish her a happy tenth birthday!"*

**The Dark Mirror: Hans Zender's Winterreise**  
**Ian Bostridge/Netia Jones/Baldur Brönnimann**

**Thursday 12- Saturday 14 May, Barbican Theatre**

Following acclaimed performances of Britten's *Curlew River* at the Barbican and on tour in the USA in 2014, Britten Sinfonia is reunited with **Ian Bostridge** and designer/director/video artist **Netia Jones** for a production of **Hans Zender's** startling orchestration of Schubert's haunting song cycle. Zender evokes the abrasive cabaret style of post-Weimar Germany; Netia Jones uses multi-layered imagery to realise a monochrome world of foreboding shadow and glittering light in this theatrical production. Ian Bostridge is the wanderer on an intensely dramatic journey through a stark wintry landscape. Sung in German with English surtitles. **Baldur Brönnimann** conducts.

Produced by the Barbican

Co-produced by Britten Sinfonia, Cal Performances at the University of California, Berkeley and National Taichung Theater, Taiwan

**Britten Sinfonia, Alice Coote and Mahan Esfahani at Saffron Hall**

**Sunday 15 May**

A concert with an embarrassment of riches: mezzo-soprano Alice Coote performs Britten's devastating *Phaedra* and two arias composed by Handel for the anguished knight-hero of his opera *Alcina*, and the award-winning Iranian/American harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani joins the orchestra for the first time to play Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3* and *Keyboard Concerto in D Minor*, and the vital harpsichord part in the orchestral accompaniment to *Phaedra*.

Britten Sinfonia becomes Resident Orchestra at Saffron Hall in Autumn 2016, and Mahan Esfahani will return to play further concerts with Britten Sinfonia in its 2016/17 season.