

Press Release

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Britten Sinfonia gives three world premieres in February

- **Francisco Coll – *Harpsichord Concerto* (3 & 4 February)**
- **Mark-Anthony Turnage – *Col* (8,10 & 14 February)**
- **Timo Andres – *Steady Hand* (25 February)**

Ian Bostridge joins Britten Sinfonia for first visit to Hamburg's Elbpharmonie: Britten's *Curlew River* (28 February)

New music plays a central role in Britten Sinfonia's musical life. The orchestra has commissioned more than 100 works in the last seven years alone, and given first performances of many more. This February sees the world premieres of three new works by both established and emerging composers. And in a month of firsts, the orchestra also makes its debut alongside Ian Bostridge at Hamburg's new Elbphilharmonie in Britten's *Curlew River*. Closer to home, the orchestra takes its popular family picture book concerts to the Barbican for the first time, as part of a short tour which also visits Norwich and Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden.

Full details at www.brittensinfonia.com

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February 2017 concerts

Mahan Esfahani and Britten Sinfonia

Friday 3 February at 7.30pm – Milton Court Concert Hall, London
Saturday 4 February at 7.30pm - Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden

Following a recent tour to China with the orchestra, **Mahan Esfahani** returns to Britten Sinfonia for a Mediterranean flavored concert, featuring the world premiere of Spanish composer Francisco Coll's *Harpsichord Concerto*, alongside a selection of Scarlatti sonatas, and works by De Falla including his *Harpsichord Concerto* and the ballet score, *El amor brujo*. **Thomas Gould** directs.

Coll's *Harpsichord Concerto*, the second piece he has written for and been commissioned by Britten Sinfonia, is dedicated to Mahan Esfahani. The work, in four movements, journeys from a fast moving, lightly fingered Toccata to an abrupt and energetic Fandango with "the flavor of Spanish flamenco music", via moments of introspection and solo virtuosity.

Britten Sinfonia at Lunch 2 – Mark-Anthony Turnage premiere

Wednesday 8 February at 1pm, Wigmore Hall

Friday 10 February at 1pm, Norwich St Andrew's Hall

Wednesday 14 February at 1pm, Cambridge West Road Concert Hall

Col, a tribute to composer Colin Matthews by **Mark-Anthony Turnage**, his first commission for the orchestra's At Lunch series, features alongside works by Stravinsky, Oliver Knussen and Ravel, in a programme curated by Turnage.

Written to commemorate Colin Matthews's 70th birthday - affectionately referred to as 'Col' in the work's title – Turnage's new octet is a lyrical tribute, with glimmering orchestral textures mixed with a hint of menace. The work reflects Matthews's ability to contrast expressivity with dynamism and a "sinister... violent quality" that Turnage says he hears lurking beneath the surface of Matthews's music. An outstanding line-up of musicians, led by **Jacqueline Shave**, includes Britten Sinfonia principals **Joy Farrall** (clarinet), **Caroline Dearnley** (cello), **Lucy Wakeford** (harp), **Clare Finnimore** (viola) and **Nicholas Daniel** (oboe). *Col* is co-commissioned by Wigmore Hall and Britten Sinfonia.

Family Picture Book Concert – Max the Brave

Friday 17 February at 2pm, St Andrew's Hall, Norwich

Saturday 18 February at 2pm and 4pm, Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden

Sunday 19 February at 2pm and 4pm, Barbican Hall, London

Britten Sinfonia's popular Family Picture Book concerts return with a new adventure, as Ed Vere's vivid children's book comes alive with music. The hour-long concerts make a welcome half-term return to Norwich and Saffron Hall, and a first visit to the Barbican. Wonderfully inventive music by Ligeti, Martinu and Mussorgsky and New Zealand composer, **Gareth Farr**, powers Max '*an expressive huge-eyed black ball of kinetic kittenness*' [New York Times] on a journey of discovery.

Max the Brave, the first in Ed Vere's best-selling 'Max' series of books was named one of the Sunday Times's '100 Modern Children's Classics', long-listed for the Kate Greenaway medal and is published in 12 languages.

Ed Vere, pen in hand, joins the orchestra on stage to illustrate Max's adventures live, and narrator/presenter **Hannah Conway** guides young audiences on an immersive journey through the twists and turns of the musical adventure, with movement direction by **Michael Spenceley**. *Max the Brave* follows in the footsteps of a hugely popular collaboration with Ed Vere based around his picture book, *Mr Big*, in 2012 and 2014.

John Adams at 70 – Barbican Hall

Saturday 25 February at 7.30pm

In a concert that both looks to the future, and reflects on the work and influence of John Adams, one of America's most influential and original composers, Britten Sinfonia gives the world premiere of *Steady Hand*, Timo Andres's concerto for two pianos (**Andres** and **David Kaplan**) and orchestra, alongside two of Adams's most popular works, *Chamber Symphony* and *Grand Pianola Music*, and Philip Glass' *Music in Similar Motion*. Part of the Barbican's *The Sounds that Changed America*.

Curlew River – Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg
Tuesday 28 February at 8.00pm

Ian Bostridge revisits Britten's *Curlew River* in a concert performance in German, reuniting with Britten Sinfonia and Britten Sinfonia Voices (Netia Jones's acclaimed production of the work, with Britten Sinfonia and Bostridge, was a highlight of the Barbican's Britten 100 celebrations and subsequently toured to the USA). **Martin Fitzpatrick** directs a cast that also includes baritones **Marcus Farnsworth** and **Jonathan Lemalu**, and **Ashley Riches** (bass).

Website links for venues

www.barbican.org.uk

www.saffronhall.com

www.westroad.org

www.wigmore-hall.org.uk

www.elbphilharmonie.de/en/whats-on/benjamin-britten-curlew-river/7115

Notes to editors:

Britten Sinfonia has commissioned or premiered over 100 new works across all its concerts in the past seven years alone, with almost 50 in the first decade of its 'At Lunch' series. In addition, the orchestra introduces school children to composing through regular sessions in schools. Its annual composition workshop for Cambridge University composition students (which is led each year by Britten Sinfonia musicians and a leading composer - including John Woolrich, Oliver Knussen, James MacMillan and Nico Muhly) has resulted in a number of commissions for young composers. www.brittensinfonia.com