

## Press Release

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## Britten Sinfonia turns 25

### 2017-2018 season announced

- **Sir Mark Elder launches three-year Brahms Symphony Cycle**
- **Thomas Adès's Beethoven Symphony Cycle reaches midway point with Symphonies 4, 5 & 6 juxtaposed with music by Gerald Barry**
- **Choral masterpieces: Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, with King's College Choir; Britten Sinfonia Voices in Stravinsky's *Mass* and Mozart's *Missa Brevis*; Bach *St John Passion* with Polyphony**
- **Jeremy Denk gets jazzy with Gershwin and Stravinsky**
- **Helen Grime curates a concert of her music and influences (part of 'This is Rattle' at the Barbican)**
- **World premieres: Mark-Anthony Turnage opera, *Coraline*; Emma-Ruth Richards orchestral work; new lunchtime commissions from Nik Bärtsch (as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival), Leo Chadburn, Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer, Caroline Shaw and Tom Coult**
- **Hitchcock in Paris: Britten Sinfonia performs live film scores to *Vertigo* and *Psycho***
- **Summer 2018 tour to South America**

Full details [www.brittensinfonia.com](http://www.brittensinfonia.com)

In 2017/18, Britten Sinfonia celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday with a season (from September 2017) that features symphonic masterpieces, choral gems, contemporary classics, world premiere performances and jazz-inspired rhapsodies.

Without a music director or principal conductor, Britten Sinfonia chooses to collaborate with guest artists from across the musical spectrum to explore and develop individual programmes and projects. Featured guest artists in the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary season include **Sir Mark Elder, Thomas Adès** and **Jeremy Denk**, with soloists **Nicolas Hodges, Ben Goldscheider, Elisabeth Kulman, Roderick Williams, Mary Bevan, Allan Clayton** and **Ailish Tynan**. New music is central to Britten Sinfonia's work (the orchestra has commissioned over 100 works in its first quarter century). The 2017/18 season includes commissions and premiere performances of music by **Gerald Barry, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Emma-Ruth Richards, Caroline Shaw, Leo Chadburn, Tom Coult** and jazz pianist, producer and composer **Nik Bärtsch**.

Concerts take place in London (at the Barbican, where Britten Sinfonia is celebrating its fifth season as Associate Ensemble, and at Wigmore Hall, where the orchestra's outstanding Principal players feature in an award-winning series of lunchtime concerts); at Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden (where Britten Sinfonia is entering its second year as Resident Orchestra), and in residence in Norwich and as ensemble-in-association at the University of Cambridge.

David Butcher, Britten Sinfonia Chief Executive and Artistic Director comments:

*"We are celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> birthday with a season of concerts that seeks to shed light on familiar works and gives a platform to the finest new music. During our first quarter century, we have been lucky to collaborate with an extraordinary range of exceptional musicians, often making unusual, bold connections between repertoire, old and new. Programmed with intelligence and imagination and played to the highest musical quality with a palpable joie de vivre, it has been a fertile, endlessly fascinating adventure. I hope that this season will offer suitably invigorating fare that will continue to make us all think about and hear music afresh. Here's to the next 25 years!"*

Highlights of Britten Sinfonia's 2017/2018 season include:

- **Sir Mark Elder launches a three-year Britten Sinfonia Brahms Symphony Cycle with Brahms's lyrical First Symphony.** Brahms's symphony, one of the greatest of all Romantic symphonies, was originally performed with considerably smaller musical forces than we are used to hearing today, and Elder remains true to the authentic spirit in this performance, allowing the fascinating details of Brahms's masterpiece to shine through. To accompany the symphony, Elder has chosen poetic works including Mahler's *Rückert-Lieder*, with soloist **Elisabeth Kulman**, Finzi's soaring elegy *The Fall of the Leaf*, and *What the wild flowers tell me*, Britten's arrangement of the second movement of Mahler's Symphony No.3 (November 2017).
- **Thomas Adès and Britten Sinfonia's journey through Beethoven's Symphonies reaches the midway point.** Pairing familiar masterpieces with the audacious works of composer Gerald Barry, the concerts set out to shed new light on Beethoven's monuments of the orchestral repertoire. Barry's passionate *The Conquest of Ireland*, with bass **Joshua Bloom**, is set alongside Beethoven's *Pastoral* 6<sup>th</sup> Symphony; Beethoven's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Symphonies are accompanied by the London premiere of Barry's *Piano Concerto*, written for, and performed by soloist **Nicolas Hodges**. Thomas Adès also leads a concert of more intimate chamber works by Beethoven and Barry from the keyboard at Milton Court Concert Hall, featuring tenor **Allan Clayton** (May 2018).
- **Christmas and Easter are marked by choral masterworks.** The **Choir of King's College Cambridge** joins Britten Sinfonia for a performance of two 20th century greats: Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, an exhilarating invocation of the composer's hopes for brotherhood and peace, sentiments mirrored by Vaughan Williams's impassioned *Dona nobis pacem*. **Stephen Cleobury** conducts the orchestra and soloists including **Ailish Tynan**. The concert, which also marks the launch of a new recording of the two pieces, opens with the premiere of a new orchestral work by **Emma-Ruth Richards**. (December 2017). Easter is marked by **Britten Sinfonia Voices** in a performance of two masses written 170 years apart: Stravinsky's *Mass*, with its sensational harmonic colours and Mozart's beautiful *Missa Brevis*. The concert is completed by 2016 BBC Young Musician of the Year finalist **Ben Goldscheider** in Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Concert étude* for solo horn. (March 2018). Britten Sinfonia also joins forces with **Polyphony** for an Easter performance of Bach's *St John Passion* at St John's Smith Square, London. **Stephen Layton** conducts with singers including **Nicholas Pritchard, Ashley Riches** and **Neal Davies** (30 March 2018).
- Mercurial American pianist **Jeremy Denk**, last heard putting the orchestra through its paces as part of the Barbican's Sound Unbound weekend in 2015, returns to direct a Milton Court Concert Hall programme of jazz-inspired works by Stravinsky and Gershwin. At its centre are two works written in 1924: Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, performed in the original jazz band arrangement and Stravinsky's rhythmically complex *Concerto for piano and winds*. (February 2018). Jeremy Denk is Milton Court Artist-in-Residence in the Barbican's 2017/2018 season (his first concerts of the residency are in October 2017).
- Britten Sinfonia's 2017-18 season opens with a concert of outstanding chamber music that journeys from Purcell to Stravinsky, curated by **Helen Grime** and featuring her own work alongside its inspirations, including music by **Britten, Oliver Knussen, George Benjamin** and **Thomas Adès** (part of the Barbican's *This is Rattle* season) (20 September 2017).

### World Premieres

Britten Sinfonia's 2017/18 season features commissions and world premiere performances of music by international composers from across the musical spectrum.

- The orchestra features in the Royal Opera House production of **Mark-Anthony Turnage's** latest opera, *Coraline*, based on the atmospheric, fantasy novel by Neil Gaiman. (Barbican Theatre, March/April 2018).
- Earlier this year, Britten Sinfonia premiered a new work by Turnage as part of its award-winning 'At Lunch' season. For 2017/18 season, 'At Lunch' commissions, co-commissioned with Wigmore Hall, venture into new musical territories, with a concert curated by Swiss jazz pianist, composer and producer, **Nik Bärtsch**, featuring new works by the winner of Britten Sinfonia's OPUS 2017 open submission composition prize and Bärtsch himself (November 2017 – as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival); a new work by **Leo Chadburn**, winner of a 2016 British Composer Award, is featured in the second lunchtime concert alongside an eclectic mix of music by Biber, Pärt, Mozart and Philip Glass (January 2018); Pulitzer-Prize winning American composer **Caroline Shaw's** new commission is set alongside Brahms's *Piano Quartet no. 1 in G minor* (April 2018). **Tom Coult's** new work written specially for **Britten Sinfonia Academy**, Britten Sinfonia's ensemble for talented young players from the East of England, is premiered in July.
- **Emma-Ruth Richards's** new work for brass, percussion, harp, piano and strings takes its lead from the journey through peace, conflict and resolution in Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* (featured in the same programme – December 2017).

### International Concerts

In recent years Britten Sinfonia's international concert programme has taken the orchestra across Europe, and to South America, USA, India and China. In 2017 it was the first UK orchestra to play at Hamburg's new Elb Philharmonie. 2017/18 will mark a return to Paris, to perform **Bernard Herrmann's** original scores to screenings of **Hitchcock's Vertigo** and *Psycho* (Philharmonie Paris, February 2018) and a summer 2018 tour to South America. **Thomas Adès** and Britten Sinfonia are joined by cellist **Steven Isserlis** and pianist **Nicolas Hodges** for a concert at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, which includes Adès *Lieux retrouvés* for cello and orchestra (Britten Sinfonia and Isserlis gave the UK premiere of the work at the 2016 Proms) and Gerald Barry's *Piano Concerto* (26 May 2018).

### Creative Learning

Britten Sinfonia Creative Learning works with up to 10,000 participants each year to discover, explore and celebrate music in families, schools and communities. 2017-2018 season highlights include Britten Sinfonia Academy's residency at the Fitzwilliam Museum, an exciting electronic collaboration with music technology students from Anglia Ruskin, a newly developed Composer Lab mentored by **Tom Coult** and a special Christmas appearance at the Barbican as part of Britten Sinfonia's 25th anniversary celebrations. The Academy features outstanding Secondary school age musical talent from the East of England and offers developmental musical experiences, including concerts and tailored workshops with Britten Sinfonia players. Thousands of primary school pupils across the East of England will also experience a specially devised interactive concert themed around Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky* poem, introducing children to a range of contemporary composers including **Gerald Barry** and **Dobrinka Tabakova**.

### Supporters

Britten Sinfonia's principal funder is Arts Council England, with a number of Trusts & Foundations providing additional valuable grant support. Britten Sinfonia also has a committed group of individual donors and corporate partners, and the orchestra delivers a range of projects each year supported by Local Authorities. The orchestra's *Musically Gifted* digital crowd funding platform enables music lovers everywhere to contribute towards commissioning a new piece of music for Britten Sinfonia, selecting from a catalogue of works by both established and emerging composers.

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## **Diary Dates:**

### **This is Rattle: Helen Grime**

#### **Curated by the composer**

Wednesday 20 September

Milton Court Concert Hall, London

### **Sir Mark Elder – Brahms Symphony Cycle**

Wednesday 8 November – St Andrew's Hall, Norwich

Thursday 9 November – Barbican Hall, London

Friday 10 November – Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden

### **Britten Sinfonia At Lunch 1 – Nik Bärtsch and OPUS 2017 winner world premieres**

Friday 17 November – Wigmore Hall, London

Tuesday 21 November – West Road Concert Hall Cambridge

Friday 24 November – St Andrew's Hall, Norwich

NB: Concerts begin at 1pm and last one hour

### **Bernstein's Chichester Psalms and Emma-Ruth Richards world premiere**

Saturday 2 December – Barbican Hall, London

Friday 16 February – Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden

### **Britten Sinfonia at Lunch 2 – Leo Chadburn world premiere**

Tuesday 23 January 2018 – West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Wednesday 24 January – Wigmore Hall, London

Friday 26 January – St Andrew's Hall, Norwich

### **Hitchcock in Paris**

Saturday 3 & Sunday 4 February – Philharmonie, Paris

### **Jeremy Denk – Rhapsody in Blue**

Tuesday 27 February – Milton Court Concert Hall, London

Thursday 1 March – Turner Sims Concert Hall, Southampton

Friday 2 March - St Andrew's Hall, Norwich

### **Mark-Anthony Turnage – Coraline**

29 March – 7 April

Barbican Theatre, London

### **Easter Voices - Stravinsky *Mass* and Mozart's *Missa Brevis***

Wednesday 28 March – Milton Court Concert Hall

### **Bach St John Passion**

Good Friday 20 March – St John's Smith Square

### **Britten Sinfonia At Lunch 3 – Caroline Shaw world premiere**

Tuesday 17 April – West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Wednesday 18 April - Wigmore Hall, London

Friday 20 April – St Andrew's Hall, Norwich

**Thomas Adès Beethoven Symphony Cycle**  
**Symphonies 4 & 5 and Gerald Barry's Piano Concerto**

Saturday 19 May – Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden

Tuesday 22 May – Barbican Hall, London

Sunday 27 May – St Andrew's Hall, Norwich

**Thomas Adès chamber concert**

Wednesday 23 May – Milton Court Concert Hall

**Thomas Adès Beethoven Symphony Cycle**  
**Symphony 6, and Gerald Barry's The Conquest of Ireland**

Sunday 20 May, Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden

Thursday 24 May – Barbican Hall

**Thomas Adès, Steven Isserlis and Nicolas Hodges**

Saturday 26 May - Concertgebouw, Amsterdam

**South American tour**

Mid-June 2018 (including concerts in Rio and Sao Paulo)

**Britten Sinfonia at Lunch 4 –Britten Sinfonia Academy gives world premiere of new work by Tom Coult**

Tuesday 3 July – West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Wednesday 4 July – St Andrew's Hall, Norwich

**Website links for venues**

[www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)

[www.saffronhall.com](http://www.saffronhall.com)

[www.westroad.org](http://www.westroad.org)

[www.wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://www.wigmore-hall.org.uk)

[www.brittensinfonia.com](http://www.brittensinfonia.com) (for ticket sales and information for Norwich concerts)