

## Press Release

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### Britten Sinfonia @ 25

#### Sir Mark Elder launches four-year Britten Sinfonia Brahms Symphony Cycle

Wednesday 8 November – St Andrew’s Hall, Norwich

Thursday 9 November – Barbican Hall, London

Friday 10 November – Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden

**Sir Mark Elder** launches a four-year Britten Sinfonia Brahms Symphony Cycle with a fresh take on Brahms’s dramatic First Symphony this November, as part of Britten Sinfonia’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary season.

The first time that Elder will have conducted a Brahms Symphony Cycle, the performances launch a four year collaboration which sets Brahms alongside Mahler Lieder and lesser known works from 20<sup>th</sup> century English repertoire. Britten Sinfonia’s Brahms Symphony Cycle traces a poetic line from mid 19<sup>th</sup> century symphonic Romanticism to more intimate evocations of poetry, love and nature in Mahler songs, and pastoral works by 20<sup>th</sup> century English composers including Finzi, Delius, Butterworth and Bridge.

Elder remains true to the authentic spirit of early performances of Brahms’s First Symphony, which was envisaged for and performed by considerably smaller musical forces than we typically hear today, with the aim of illuminating the fascinating details of one of the greatest of all Romantic symphonies. Elder describes Brahms’s Symphonies as “great musical journeys” and the First Symphony as a “wonderful, original, daring masterpiece” in which Brahms’s shows “absolute mastery of what he wanted to say.” To accompany the symphony, Elder has chosen poetic works including Mahler’s *Rückert-Lieder*, with soloist Austrian mezzo-soprano/contralto **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.

Sir Mark Elder, who is returning to conduct Britten Sinfonia for the first time since acclaimed performances of Berlioz’s *L’Enfance du Christ* in 2011, comments: “*People expect Brahms to have a weight of sound, a monumentality, which isn’t in proportion to what I read in his scores. We know from his letters that Brahms always preferred a small string section, thereby enabling the woodwind writing to be effortlessly heard without exaggeration. Working with one of the world’s finest chamber orchestras, I’m hoping to reveal the secret side of Brahms’s music; moments of incredible intimacy and delicacy, alongside the Romantic bravura.*”

Performances take place in Norwich, Barbican Hall, London - where the orchestra is an Associate Ensemble - and Saffron Hall, where Britten Sinfonia is Resident Orchestra.

#### BRITTEN SINFONIA 2017-2018 SEASON

**Britten Sinfonia’s 2017-2018 season is its 25<sup>th</sup>. Following the launch of the Brahms Symphony Cycle, the season continues with a typically eclectic mix of concerts and performances:**

- **Thomas Adès’s Beethoven Symphony Cycle** reaches midway point with Symphonies 4, 5 & 6 juxtaposed with music by **Gerald Barry** (May 2018)
- **Jeremy Denk** gets jazzy with Stravinsky and the original 1942 jazz band version of Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* (February/March 2018)

- Choral masterpieces for Christmas and Easter: **Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms***, with **King's College Choir** (December); **Britten Sinfonia Voices** in **Stravinsky's *Mass*** and **Mozart's *Missa Brevis***; **Bach *St John Passion*** with **Polyphony** (March 2018)
- World premieres include **Mark-Anthony Turnage's** opera, ***Coraline*** (March/April) an orchestral work by **Emma-Ruth Richards** (December) and 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** (November 2017 – April 2018).

Plus

- **Hitchcock in Paris**: Britten Sinfonia performs live film scores to *Vertigo* and *Psycho*
- **Summer 2018 tour to South America**

**WATCH THE TRAILER FOR BRITTEN SINFONIA'S 2017-2018 SEASON AT <https://vimeo.com/231839756>**

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

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.

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**Sir Mark Elder: Brahms Symphony Cycle**

#### **Programme**

Mahler arr. Britten	<i>What the Wild Flowers tell me</i>
Finzi	<i>The Fall of the Leaf</i>
Mahler	<i>Rückert-Lieder</i>
Brahms	<i>Symphony No. 1</i>

Sir Mark Elder	conductor
Elisabeth Kulman	mezzo-soprano

Wednesday 8 November – St Andrew's Hall, Norwich

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

£8 - £34 (£6 concessions)

Thursday 9 November – Barbican Hall, London

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

£15 - £45

Friday 10 November – Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden

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

£10-£50 (£6 concessions)