

## Press Release

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### PUBLIC BOOKING OPENS TODAY FOR

### Britten Sinfonia – 2018-2019 season as Barbican Associate Ensemble

- **Sir Mark Elder: Brahms Symphony Cycle**
- **Thomas Adès: Beethoven Symphony Cycle**
- **World premiere of new arrangement of Nico Muhly's *The Last Letter***
- **Handel's *Messiah*, with soloists Sophie Bevan, Iestyn Davies, Allan Clayton and Roderick Williams**
- **Independent Opera and Britten Sinfonia – new cantata by Joby Talbot**
- **Opera Rara and Britten Sinfonia – Donizetti's rarely performed *Il Paria***

Britten Sinfonia's 2018-2019 season as Associate Ensemble at the Barbican offers an outstanding line-up of guest musicians, conductors and composers, with concerts that draw intriguing lines between a wide array of music from across four centuries. Public booking opens today at [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)

Two major Symphony Cycles provide the backbone to Britten Sinfonia's 2018-2019 Barbican Season. **Britten Sinfonia** and **Sir Mark Elder's** four-year Brahms Symphony Cycle, which opened to widespread acclaim in 2017, offers a more intimate reading of Brahms's symphonic work, in the spirit of how Brahms intended the works to be heard. The focus in 2019 is on Brahms's *Second Symphony*. Tracing a line from Romanticism to 20<sup>th</sup> century evocations of poetry, love and nature, the symphony is performed alongside Delius's rarely heard *North Country Sketches*, and Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, with mezzo-soprano **Anna Stéphany** (Barbican Hall, 17 January 2019). **Thomas Adès/Britten Sinfonia's Beethoven Symphony Cycle** reaches its conclusion in 2019 with the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and mighty 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony. The symphonies are juxtaposed with works by Irish composer - and Beethoven devotee - **Gerald Barry**. Barry's *The Eternal Recurrence* (a setting of Nietzsche for voice and orchestra) and *Dead March* (where melodies behave "as if everything is possible") are the featured works in 2019. (Barbican Hall, 21 & 26 May 2019, and broadcast on BBC Radio 3).

As part of the Barbican's *For the Fallen: Marking the First World War Centenary*, Britten Sinfonia gives the world premiere of a new arrangement for chamber orchestra of **Nico Muhly's** poignant *The Last Letter*, settings of letters sent between soldiers on both sides of the conflict and their loved ones. *The Western Playland*, **Ivor Gurney's** exquisite settings of poetry from AE Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*, and compelling writings by Gurney and others who were profoundly affected by their experiences both on the battlefield and the home front complete a gripping programme of music and words. (Milton Court Concert Hall – 9 November 2018).

Further season highlights include a Christmas performance of Handel's *Messiah* with a stellar line-up of British singers, including **Sophie Bevan, Iestyn Davies, Allan Clayton** and **Roderick Williams** (Barbican Hall, 19 December 2018). Britten Sinfonia also joins **Independent Opera** for a performance of *A Sheen of Dew on Flowers*, a new cantata by **Joby Talbot**. Independent Opera's new commission, settings of love poetry from across the ages, takes inspiration from the enduring partnership of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and marks the bicentenary of their births in 1819. (Barbican Hall, 11 April 2019). The orchestra teams up with **Opera Rara** and an international cast for a forgotten treat, exotically set in Ancient India: Donizetti's daring *Il Paria* [The Outcast] conducted by **Sir Mark Elder** (Barbican Hall, 8 June 2019).

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