

Press Release

For release: 27 June 2018



Britten Sinfonia – 2018-2019 season

Barbican and Wigmore Hall, London * Saffron Hall * Norwich * Cambridge

Highlights include:

- **Sir Mark Elder - Brahms Symphony Cycle features 2nd Symphony alongside music by Mahler and Britten**
- **Thomas Adès – culmination of Beethoven Symphony Cycle: Symphonies 7, 8 & 9 performed alongside Gerald Barry's *The Eternal Recurrence* and *Dead March***

New music and commissions include:

- **World premiere of new arrangement of Nico Muhly's *The Last Letter***
- **UK premiere of legendary jazz pianist Brad Mehldau's *Piano Concerto***
- **World premiere of Colin Matthews *Octet* for oboe and chamber ensemble**
- **Luke Styles writes new song cycle for Mark Padmore and Britten Sinfonia**
- **World premiere of 'At Lunch' chamber commissions by Edmund Finnis, Josephine Stephenson and the winner of the orchestra's OPUS2018 competition for unpublished composers**
- **Independent Opera and Britten Sinfonia give world premiere of new cantata by Joby Talbot**

Plus:

- **Handel's *Messiah*, with soloists Sophie Bevan, Iestyn Davies, Allan Clayton and Roderick Williams marks orchestra's return to Amsterdam Concertgebouw**
- **Opera Rara and Britten Sinfonia – Donizetti's rarely performed *Il Paria***
- **Britten Sinfonia Creative Learning: Live toy improvisation, video game soundtracks, and a 50th anniversary celebration of the moon landing in schools across the East of England**

Britten Sinfonia's 2018-2019 season 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.

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 which offer incisive, and at times, revelatory interpretations of both familiar and new music.

- Three close artistic collaborations deepen in 2018-19, with the conclusion of **Thomas Adès's Beethoven Symphony Cycle**, the second year of **Sir Mark Elder's exploration of Brahms's Symphonies**, and a new song cycle, and the launch of a three-year project in Lincolnshire with tenor **Mark Padmore**.
- The season features a host of new works, including premieres from jazz pianist **Brad Mehldau**, **Nico Muhly** and **Colin Matthews**, and from emerging younger composers: **Luke Styles**, **Edmund Finnis** and 28-year-old **Josephine Stephenson**. With guidance and mentoring from composer **Sir James MacMillan**, Britten Sinfonia continues its search for hidden composing talent, offering a commission to the winner of its OPUS2018 competition for unpublished composers.
- The orchestra partners **Opera Rara** in Donizetti's rarely performed *Il Paria*, and **Independent Opera** on Joby Talbot's new cantata marking the bicentenary of the births of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in

1819. And there's a Christmas performance of Handel's *Messiah* that features the best of British singers: **Sophie Bevan, Allan Clayton, Iestyn Davies and Roderick Williams**, at the Barbican, Saffron Hall and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw.

Britten Sinfonia is Associate Ensemble at the Barbican, Resident Orchestra at Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden and is Resident in Norwich where it performs at the Theatre Royal and St Andrew's Hall. Britten Sinfonia 'At Lunch' concerts are performed in Norwich, and at Wigmore Hall London and West Road Concert Hall Cambridge. The season also includes a return to Amsterdam's Concertgebouw.

David Butcher, Britten Sinfonia Chief Executive and Artistic Director comments: *"Working with individual guest musicians to develop concerts always brings a fresh take on music - it's a model that Britten Sinfonia, with neither Principal Conductor nor Music Director, has championed, and it remains radical in its capacity to surprise and illuminate music from across the centuries."*

Journeys - musical or otherwise - are made all the more enjoyable by your choice of travelling companions, and this season we will be joined by four of the very best - Mark Padmore, Thomas Adès, Sir Mark Elder and, mentoring unpublished composers via our OPUS2018 competition, Sir James MacMillan. We've got to know each other well over many years, which allows us to take our music making to a whole new level. And with an outstanding line up of soloists, and a host of new works by composers both familiar and new to the orchestra, who knows where our adventures in music may lead in 2018-2019."

FURTHER PRESS INFORMATION FROM: SOPHIE COHEN ON 020 7482 3466 07711 551 787
sophie@sophiecohenartspr.com

BRITTEN SINFONIA – 2018-19 SEASON

THE CONCERTS

Two major Symphony Cycles provide the backbone to Britten Sinfonia's 2018-2019 Season:

BRAHMS SYMPHONY CYCLE

"I'm hoping to reveal the secret side of Brahms's music; moments of incredible intimacy and delicacy, alongside the Romantic bravura." Sir Mark Elder

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 20th century evocations of poetry, love and nature, the symphony is performed alongside Britten's *Suite on English Folk Tunes*, and Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, with mezzo-soprano **Anna Stéphany (Barbican, Norwich and Saffron Hall, 17-19 January 2019).**

BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY CYCLE

Thomas Adès and Britten Sinfonia's **Beethoven Symphony Cycle** reaches its conclusion in 2019 with the 7th, 8th and mighty 9th Symphony. The symphonies, which Adès describes as *"combustible ... there's a nakedness to every element that is new"*, 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. **(18-26 May, Barbican, Saffron Hall and Norwich, and broadcast on BBC Radio 3).**

NICO MUHLY: THE LAST LETTER

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 in Norwich, Saffron Hall and at the Barbican, as part of *For the Fallen: Marking the First World War Centenary*. *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. [\(8, 9 & 10 November 2018 - Norwich, Milton Court Concert Hall, London and Saffron Hall\)](#).

NEW COMMISSIONS AND PREMIERE PERFORMANCES

In a strong season for new music, the orchestra's award-winning 'At Lunch' series gives a platform to three exceptional young composers. **Luke Styles** has been commissioned to write a new song cycle for Britten Sinfonia and its close artistic collaborator, **Mark Padmore**. The work will open the orchestra's 'At Lunch' 2018/19 season [\(20-23 November 2018\)](#), which places world premieres (jointly commissioned by Britten Sinfonia and Wigmore Hall) alongside key works from the chamber repertoire; to date the series has featured over 50 specially commissioned new works. The season also features a new commission for Piano Trio by **Edmund Finnis** in February. 28-year-old composer **Josephine Stephenson** will write for Britten Sinfonia Academy, the orchestra's ensemble for outstanding school-aged musical talent from the East of England (to be premiered in July 2019). The winner of the orchestra's OPUS 2018 competition, designed to give opportunities to unpublished composers (of all ages) will also write a new 'At Lunch' work (world premiere March 2019). This year's OPUS mentor is composer **Sir James MacMillan**.

One of the great improvisers of contemporary jazz piano, **Brad Mehldau** and Britten Sinfonia give the UK premiere of his new piano concerto, commissioned by the orchestra and the Barbican [\(Barbican, 16 March 2019\)](#).

Britten Sinfonia joins **Independent Opera** for a performance of a new cantata by **Joby Talbot**. Independent Opera's new commission, *A Sheen of Dew on Flowers*, 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. Texts include three German poems that Prince Albert himself set to music [\(Barbican Hall, 11 April 2019\)](#). The orchestra gives the world premiere of **Colin Matthews's** *Octet*, written for chamber ensemble and Britten Sinfonia Principal Oboe, **Nicholas Daniel** [\(Wigmore Hall, 6 February 2019\)](#). Further premieres will be announced later this year.

MARK PADMORE

November 2018 sees the launch of a three-year project of concerts and workshops in Lincolnshire, an area traditionally under served by classical music. In this first year, partnering with Lincolnshire International Chamber Music Festival, **Mark Padmore** and **Britten Sinfonia** will perform Luke Style's new song cycle in Lincoln and Alford, and Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* at Crowland Abbey, alongside schools performances and workshops in partnership with the David Ross Educational Trust. (20 November – 9 December).

HANDEL AND DONIZETTI

There's a stellar line-up of British singers for Christmas performances by Britten Sinfonia and Britten Sinfonia Voices of Handel's *Messiah*. **Sophie Bevan**, and three RPS Music Award winners - **Iestyn Davies**, **Allan Clayton** and **Roderick Williams** are the soloists in performances at the Barbican, Saffron Hall and at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw – part of an ongoing relationship between the orchestra and the Concertgebouw that included a recent concert with Thomas Adès [\(17-22 December 2018\)](#). 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).

BRITTEN SINFONIA CREATIVE LEARNING

Britten Sinfonia Creative Learning works with up to 10,000 participants and dozens of local partners each year to discover, explore and celebrate music in families, schools and communities. 2018-2019 season

highlights include a large-scale video game project in collaboration with Peterborough Music Hub, composer mentoring programmes for all ages led by Edmund Finnis and James MacMillan, a family show with live toy improvisation, Britten Sinfonia Academy's masterclass with Sir Mark Elder, and performances at the Barbican, West Road Concert Hall, St Andrew's Hall in Norwich, and the Union Chapel in London. The Academy features outstanding Secondary school age musical talent from the East of England and offers developmental musical experiences, including concerts and regular side-by-side mentoring from Britten Sinfonia players. Thousands of primary school pupils across the East of England will also experience a specially devised interactive concert celebrating the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, introducing children to an eclectic range of music including contemporary composers **Nico Muhly, Arvo Pärt** and **Thomas Adès**.

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.

Further press information from Sophie Cohen on 07711 551 787 020 7482 3466
sophie@sophiecohenartspr.com

FULL DETAILS OF CONCERTS AND BRITTEN SINFONIA CREATIVE LEARNING AT: www.brittensinfonia.com