

Britten Sinfonia with Benjamin Grosvenor

Benjamin Grosvenor *director/piano*
Thomas Gould *director/violin*

J S Bach <i>Keyboard Concerto in F minor BWV 1056</i>	10 mins
Robin Haigh <i>Grin (world premiere tour)</i>	10 mins
Mozart <i>Piano Concerto No. 9 K.271, Le Jeunehomme</i>	30 mins
Interval	20 mins
J S Bach <i>Goldberg Variations*</i>	60 mins
Dobrinka Tabakova <i>Fantasy Homage to Schubert†</i>	14 mins
Schubert arr. Tabakova <i>Fantasia in F minor†</i>	25 mins

* Norwich

† Saffron Hall and Milton Court

St Andrew's Hall, Norwich
Tuesday 12 November 2019 at 7.30pm

Pre-concert talk at 6.30pm
Dr Kate Kennedy leads a pre-concert talk
introducing this evening's programme.

Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden
Sunday 24 November 2019 at 3pm

Milton Court, London
Tuesday 26 November 2019 at 7.30pm

Pre-concert talk at 6.30pm
Dr Kate Kennedy leads a pre-concert talk
introducing this evening's programme.

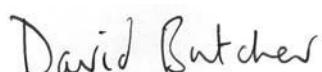
Welcome

We're delighted to welcome back the wonderful pianist Benjamin Grosvenor to the orchestra, this time performing Bach and Mozart concerti. As well as concerts at our residencies in Norwich, Saffron Hall and London's Milton Court, we're also touring in China and Taipei with a further five performances, so it's a great opportunity for the orchestra to spend quality time fostering this collaboration and to really get under the skin of these great works.

Of course, there's usually a surprise in Britten Sinfonia programmes, and we're thrilled to be giving the world premiere of Robin Haigh's *Grin*. Robin is one of this country's finest young composers, having won a prestigious British Composer Award at the tender age of 24. This commission has been made possible through our highly valued partnership – now in its ninth year – with the William Alwyn Foundation, who champion the orchestral work of emerging young composers. A huge thank you to them for this important and invaluable support. For audiences in Milton Court and Saffron Hall, we're also thrilled to perform Dobrinka Tabakova's arrangement of Schubert's heavenly F minor *Fantasia*, preceded by her own *Fantasy Homage to Schubert*, which should be both fascinating and illuminating.

We've also recently re-launched our Friends schemes, offering exciting and inspiring ways of getting closer to the orchestra (with many exclusive benefits) and helping us continue to present bold and exciting concerts in our key residencies. Please do join and help support our musicians and our work.

Enjoy the concert.



David Butcher
Chief Executive and Artistic Director

On stage

FIRST VIOLINS

Thomas Gould
Jamie Campbell
Katherine Shave
Cecily Ward
Michael Jones

SECOND VIOLINS

Miranda Dale
Marcus Broome
Judith Stowe
Natalia Bonner

VIOLAS

Steven Burnard
Meghan Cassidy
Bridget Carey

CELLOS

Caroline Dearnley
Ben Chappell
Julia Vohralik

BASSES

Benjamin Scott-Russell
Elena Hull

OBOES

Peter Facer
Jessica Mogridge

HORNS

Alex Wide
Tom Rumsby

Please try to restrain coughing until the normal breaks in the performance.

If you have a mobile telephone, please ensure that it is turned off during the performance.

In accordance with the requirements of the licensing authority, persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways.

No camera, tape recorder, other types of recording apparatus, food or drink may be brought into the auditorium. It is illegal to record any performance unless prior arrangements have been made with the Managing Director and the concert promoter concerned.

No smoking in the auditorium

Milton Court is surrounded by a residential community. Our neighbours would appreciate your keeping noise and disturbance to a minimum when you leave the building after the performance.

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Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685–1750)

Keyboard Concerto No. 5 in F minor, BWV 1056 (c.1738)

I: Allegro
II: Largo
III: Presto

Bach took up his last major post – as Cantor at the Thomasschule in Leipzig – in 1723, where alongside his teaching duties he was required to compose music for the two main churches in Leipzig. As his sacred repertoire ballooned, Bach refocused his attention on instrumental music and in 1729 took up the post as Director of the Collegium Musicum, a secular performance ensemble set up by Telemann at the turn of the century. His tenure with the group seems to have rekindled his interest in the instrumental concerto and in the years that followed, Bach composed a wealth of new works for the ensemble. In particular, he focused on concertos for solo harpsichord, an instrument that had now become a concertante soloist on a par with instruments such as the violin and oboe. Instead of composing new works from scratch, Bach based all of his concertos for the harpsichord on pre-existent works for other instruments – a process known as ‘parody’. Of the 25 instrumental concertos he left behind, only 17 of these are ‘original’ works, the other eight being transcriptions or adaptations.

Although Bach was keenly influenced by Vivaldi in his development of the concerto, he also took these Italian models and shaped them to suit his own ends. While Vivaldi established the now-prevalent three-movement, cyclical concerto pattern (fast-slow-fast) and introduced the *ritornello* principle as a key component of the form, he also provided Bach with an indispensable prototype, which he was then able to fuse with more Germanic practices to mould the concerto in his own manner. In Bach’s works, the Italian principles of alternation and harmonic exploration are combined with the more Austro-Germanic formal characteristics of rigour and regularity.

Bach also expanded the central, slow movement of the concerto to hitherto unwitnessed proportions, doing away with the short, intermezzo-like interludes of Vivaldi and moving towards a longer, more elaborate structure more befitting of the newly contemplative concerto design. This change was just one example of Bach’s shift away from the Italianate characteristic of virtuosity for its own sake, towards an altogether more homogenous, integrated formal practice.

The Six Concertos for Harpsichord and Strings, BWV 1052–7, represent Bach at the pinnacle of his career. Perhaps with reference to Vivaldi’s *L’estro Armonico*, Bach also grouped these six concertos together to form a self-contained set: as with other sets of works by Bach, the score is introduced by the letters ‘J.J.’ (‘Jesu juva’) and concluded with ‘Finis. S. D. Gl.’ (‘Soli deo gloria’). The outer movements of the Concerto in F minor are thought to be transcriptions of a violin concerto that has since been lost, while the central *Largo* borrows from the introductory Sinfonia of Cantata BWV156, *Ich steh’ mit einem Fuß im Grabe*. The poignant lyricism of this central *Largo*, with its serene, barely-there accompaniment, is somewhat at odds with the angularity of the opening movement. Although full of energy, the chromaticism of the opening theme lends the movement a strange sense of disquiet, its uncertainty resurfacing once more in the stop-start finale.

Note © Jo Kirkbride

Robin Haigh

(b. 1993)

Grin (2019)

To *Grin* is to smile with exposed teeth. When we grin, we expose perhaps the most destructive part of the human anatomy as a signal of joy or amusement, the part of us which only really exists to grind down organic matter into tiny pieces. While writing this piece, I was reminded of videos in which demonstrations of extremely destructive machines are paired with cheerful, peppy music to entice potential corporate customers, producing something absurd, comical, and somewhat disturbing. The brutality of the imagery in these videos is somehow matched by accompanying music which is in its own way brutal; brutally repetitive, and brutally cheerful, like a forced grin.

Note © Robin Haigh

The commissioning of Robin Haigh's Grin has been made possible with generous support from principal funder, The William Alwyn Foundation. It has also been supported by the PRS Foundation, Britten-Pears Foundation and individual donors to Britten Sinfonia's Musically Gifted Campaign.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Robin Haigh is a composer from London. In 2017 he became one of the youngest ever recipients of a British Composer Award at the age of 24. As well as being commissioned by the UK's most prestigious ensembles and institutions such as the LSO, Britten Sinfonia and Sage Gateshead, he has collaborated closely with leading ensembles of his own generation including the Ligeti Quartet and The Hermes Experiment.

One of his most long-standing collaborations has been with recorder player Tabea Debus, for whom he has written a trilogy of pieces: *In Feyre Foreste* for recorder quintet, *Twenty One Minute Pieces* for four players, and *Aesop* for solo recorder and

eight players. Dramatic works include the comic opera *The Man Who Woke Up*, which has been performed in London, Chicago, and Louisville, and *1936* for two narrators and fifteen players, played by the East London Music Group and Uncharted Lines ensemble.

In 2017 he was PRSF Young Composer in Residence with the Sage Gateshead, writing the piece *Zehner* for the Young Sinfonia, and delivering composition workshops to students. His work with children continued when he was commissioned by the LSO in 2018 to write several pieces for a storytelling concert for under-5s, which later toured to Dublin.

Robin is a 2019–20 Royal Philharmonic Society Composer. He won the Royal Academy of Music's Eric Coates Prize, and was selected for the inaugural PRS Accelerate scheme, as well as both Phase I and II of the LSO's Soundhub scheme. He was one of six composers chosen to appear on NMC's Next Wave 2 release which features his piece *Zorthern*, performed by the Royal Northern Sinfonia.

Robin studied at Goldsmiths College and the Royal Academy of Music with teachers including Dmitri Smirnov, Edmund Finnis, and David Sawer, and has worked as an assistant to Sir Harrison Birtwistle. He currently studies for a PhD at the University of York with Martin Suckling, supported by a WRoCAH studentship.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756–91)

Piano Concerto No. 9 in E flat major K. 271, *Le Jeunehomme* (1777)

- I: Allegro
- II: Andantino
- III: Rondo (Presto)

Although we know Mozart best today for his skills as a composer, he first came to the public's attention as a prodigious pianist. A talented virtuoso by the age of 6, Mozart first found fame on the concert platform and continued to perform widely as a soloist throughout his career, often giving the premiere of each new concerto himself. By the time he reached his twenties, he had already premiered his first eight piano concertos (although the first four are arrangements of works by other composers), but it was his ninth – the Concerto in E flat major K. 271 – that was to become a landmark of the genre. Alfred Brendel has called it 'one of the greatest wonders of the world'.

Mozart apparently thought highly of the work too, as it is thought to be the first concerto he arranged for publication. But in a letter to a conductor with whom he collaborated some years later, Mozart was at pains to point out that such successful works are as much a product of sustained and diligent research as they are of spontaneous invention. 'It is a mistake to think that the practice of my art has become easy to me', he wrote. 'I assure you, dear friend, no one has given so much care to the study of composition as I. There is scarcely a famous master in music whose works I have not frequently and diligently studied.'

It is all the more striking, then, that these tireless efforts culminated in works of such remarkable originality. The E flat major Concerto's surprises are present from the very outset, which sees Mozart – breaking with the concerto etiquette of the day – allow the piano to interrupt the opening orchestral introduction. It is a signal of intent: soloist and orchestra are now to be intertwined. This is to be a new chapter in the classical concerto, the lines between the two formerly contrasting parties deliberately blurred. Mozart sees this through to the final bars of the movement too, allowing the soloist to continue playing after the final cadenza. After such joyous and seemingly carefree abandon, the troubled *Andantino* comes as another surprise. From florid, recitative-like utterances in the solo piano, to the ebb and swell of the accompanying strings in the instrumental 'aria' that follows, Mozart packs the slow movement with the kind of high drama that would not sound out of place in the opera house. From high drama to high stakes, the finale is a whirlwind of frenetic activity that spirals around surely one of the longest opening themes (34 bars!) that Mozart ever composed. But this movement, too, has one final surprise in store: an unannounced, out-of-place *Minuet* that arrives just as the finale seems to be ready to draw to a close. Like the antiquated Baroque ornamentation of the slow movement, this *Minuet* takes on the character of a nostalgic throwback, as though Mozart were looking back fondly on a former era, even as he single-handedly launches the next one.

Note © Jo Kirkbride

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Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685–1750)

Goldberg Variations (1741), arr. Dmitry Sitkovetsky (b. 1954)

The reverence we bestow on Bach's music owes much to works he composed at the end of his career. It is these masterful pieces – even more so than the cantatas, orchestral suites and fugues – that capture our imagination. It is not that this music is greater than his work in the decades beforehand, but that its purpose, its audaciousness, is so remarkable. *The Art of Fugue*, *A Musical Offering*, the *Chorale Variations on 'Von Himmel Hoch'*, the *Mass in B minor* – all were composed without function, without promise of performance, for no other reason than for Bach to celebrate his own legacy. They are fitting denouements to a life spent honing his skill, presenting a systematic cataloguing of every facet of his craft. Together, they capture his accomplishments in fugue (*The Art of Fugue*), counterpoint (*A Musical Offering*), variation (the 'Goldbergs') and choral music (the *Mass in B minor*).

The *Goldberg Variations* display Bach's knowledge of the musical styles of his day and his exquisite performing techniques. On the title page, Bach writes that the variations are 'composed for connoisseurs, for the refreshment of their spirits', but there is no dedicatee. The set later received the 'Goldberg' title, ostensibly written for the young pianist Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, but this was likely fabricated by Bach's biographer. We can only speculate on the reason for the set's composition, but their craftsmanship, elegance and emotional power are never in doubt. In their original form for keyboard, they form one of the most challenging series of variations in western classical music.

The difficulty stems from the intricate techniques that challenge even the best performers, but also the set's purity, its refusal to stray from G major, and the absence of any extraneous notes or embellishments. It derives its source material from a sarabande which Bach titles 'Aria'. This dance movement, consisting of two parts of sixteen bars,

creates a symmetrical structure for the variations, which use the Aria's ground bass as their source. The Aria's symmetry is echoed in what follows, too. The set's 32 'movements' are divided into two sets of 16, a feature that Bach marks with a closure in G major (Variation 15) and a French Overture (Variation 16). Bach also incorporates nine canons, appearing at strict intervals (every three movements). This planning comes as no surprise – Bach's works are littered with symmetrical structures, symbols and cross-referencing.

Despite the detail with which Bach conceived the architecture of the piece, and despite the ever-present risk in variations sets of repeating the same theme too many times, there is no hint of monotony. The range of moods, the depth of expression and the seamlessness with which Bach weaves the work together is testament to his extraordinary skill. As the listener is led back, after Variation 30, to the Aria once more, its simplicity shines anew, basking in the reflection of all that has come in between.

It is little surprise this work has attracted the attention of composers over the years and has been arranged for organ, harp, guitar and jazz trio to name but a few. Perhaps the most successful transcription is by Dmitry Sitkovetsky. His arrangement of the Goldbergs for strings, made in 1985, is lovingly crafted. He dedicates the arrangement to Glenn Gould, and it is clear from much of the ornamentation that Gould's recordings of the Goldbergs were Sitkovetsky's passport into the music. The arrangement for strings offers a unity of timbre that is integral to the original work for keyboard, while allowing each instrument to project the melodies in a distinguishable way. String instruments offer greater range of expressive possibilities than keyboard, including tuning notes expressively and colouring notes with vibrato. But Sitkovetsky's real triumph is to preserve the simplicity of texture and clarity of development that characterises Bach's masterpiece: it is a true celebration of Bach's vision.

Note © Jo Kirkbride

Fantasy Homage to Schubert (2013)

'Thoughtful', 'approachable' and with 'huge emotional depth', Dobrinka Tabakova's music has changed perceptions about the accessibility of contemporary music. 'I enjoy music which moves me', she says, 'so I hope I can give that back to the musicians and the audience.' Above all, she cites a desire 'to connect and communicate', to shape time through sound. The results are works which are saturated with colour, built from layer upon layer of material, the textures shifting and warping over great expanses of time. It is visual and visceral, so it is little wonder that it has found a life beyond the concert hall too – in films, theatre and dance.

This creative breadth is indicative of Tabakova's musical upbringing. Born in Bulgaria in what she describes as a musical household (though neither of her parents were musicians themselves), she began improvising at the piano as soon as she had learned the notes, grabbing every opportunity to expand her musical horizons that came her way. Meeting Xenakis at a composing summer school when she was 15 was a huge turning point: 'After leafing through the scores for a while he looked at me and said "don't be afraid to be different". I have been grateful for his words ever since.'

For Tabakova, 'being different' often means being less radical than others might expect, or rather, finding radical ideas in familiar territory. Her *Fantasy Homage to Schubert* is a case in point. It is not, as the title might suggest, a backward-looking piece of pastiche, but a modern fantasy that weaves newness from the threads of the old. It is a Fantasy in the traditional sense of the term, a work that gives the illusion of spontaneous, organic creation, when beneath the surface lies precision and carefully sculpted structures. So, Tabakova gives us incremental layers of sound, a slow and homogenous gathering of texture that conjures a sense of space, of floating, of weightlessness. It seems to have very little to do with Schubert at all – until, just as the swell seems to be subsiding, the gloom disappearing, a lone viola emerges from the shadows with the theme from Schubert's *Fantasie* for violin, as though in the midst of a dream. It is a miraculous marrying of old and new, the centuries between them navigated effortlessly, as though the intervening years were nothing at all.

Note © Jo Kirkbride

E-NEWSLETTER

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Franz Schubert

(1797–1828)

Fantasie in F minor, D. 940 (1828) arr. Dobrinka Tabakova (b. 1980)

By the late 1820s, Schubert confided to his friends that he feared he was near death. What we now know to have been syphilis-related health problems were diagnosed as typhoid fever, but Schubert knew there was little hope of a recovery. Although he continued to enjoy an active social life and maintained a busy composing schedule, the works of his last years bear an unmistakable trace of melancholy and an apparent awareness of his impending fate. Remarkably, it was also a time of great creativity. In 1828 alone Schubert completed his last three Piano Sonatas, the Three Piano Pieces, D. 946, the Mass in E flat major, D. 950, the String Quintet, D. 956, and the *Schwanengesang* song collection.

This was also the year of his *Fantasie in F minor*, widely regarded as his most important work for piano duet. In form it represents the culmination of an idea that had preoccupied him since his youth – the fusing together of the sonata's discrete movements into a single, cohesive whole. Indeed, his earliest surviving work, composed in 1810 when he was just thirteen years old, is also a *Fantasie* for piano duet. But where his youthful *Fantasie* in G major unfolds as an ambitious, quasi-improvisatory chain of thoughts and ideas, its modulations at times wild and untamed, his late *Fantasie* in F minor bears all the hallmarks of a more mature and assured composer. The *Fantasie* in F minor is a *fantasia quasi una sonata* in all but name, a work that is clearly divided into four distinct movements that follow one another without pause – a form Schubert had explored in his *Wanderer Fantasy* (for solo piano) of 1822. Arranged, as it is today, for string ensemble by Dobrinka Tabakova, it bears this taut musical form all the more keenly, appearing to take on the more robust, teleological form of a tone poem.

This owes much to Tabakova's arrangement, which is much more than just a translation. Where Schubert's original piano duet falls into four parts, Tabakova gives us nine, resulting in an expansive texture that verges on the symphonic. The *Fantasie* begins tentatively, a sense of nervous inquisitiveness that borders on fear invading the first violin's probing theme. But as the texture swells, this disquiet seems to melt away, the minor mode softening occasionally into the major, the strings joining one another in glimpses of unison. These moments of light and softness are, however, just that, fleeting glimpses that are eclipsed by the work's overwhelming melancholy. The 'slow movement' descends still further into the depths of F sharp minor, its theme coursing with anguish, while even the bright D major scherzo that follows takes a turn back towards F sharp minor en route to the finale. Since this is a fantasy moulded in the image of a sonata, Schubert closes the work by revisiting its opening theme, before launching headlong into a muscular, hard-won fugue. A dramatic moment of silence severs the texture, and there is nothing more that can be done: the fantasy collapses, its energy well and truly spent.

Note © Jo Kirkbride

Benjamin Grosvenor

Benjamin Grosvenor is internationally recognised for his electrifying performances, distinctive sound and insightful interpretations, prompting *The Independent* to describe him as ‘one in a million... several million’.

Recent and forthcoming concerto highlights include engagements with the Boston, Chicago and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Gürzenich-Orchestra Cologne, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Hallé Orchestra, Orquesta Nacional de España, Filarmonica della Scala, Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, London Philharmonic Orchestra, and the London, City of Birmingham, San Francisco, and Washington National Symphony Orchestras as well as a tour of China with Britten Sinfonia. Benjamin works with such esteemed conductors as Andrey Boreyko, Semyon Bychkov, Riccardo Chailly, Elim Chan, Sir Mark Elder, Edward Gardner, Alan Gilbert, Manfred Honeck, Vladimir Jurowski, Andrew Manze, Ludovic Morlot, Kent Nagano, Sir Roger Norrington, Gianandrea Noseda, Andrés Orozco-Estrada, François-Xavier Roth, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Leonard Slatkin, Nathalie Stutzmann, Michael Tilson Thomas, Krzysztof Urbanski, and Kazuki Yamada.

Among Benjamin’s major recital dates in the 2019–20 season are London’s Wigmore Hall, Théâtre des Champs Elysées Paris, Munich’s Herkulesaal, Cologne Philharmonie, Palau de la Música Catalana Barcelona, New York’s Peoples’ Symphony Concerts, Vancouver Recital Series, Atlanta’s Spivey Hall and Teatro Petruzzelli Bari. Also a keen chamber musician, the season sees Benjamin embark on a North American duo tour with violinist Hyeyoon Park, join musicians of the Lucerne Festival Soloists for a performance at the new Andermatt Concert Hall and return to the International Chamber Music Season at London’s Southbank Centre.

Thomas Gould

One of the most versatile and original violinists of his generation, Thomas Gould has forged an unusually varied career that encompasses directing, leading, playing concertos, chamber and new music, and also working in jazz and other non-classical genres.

Thomas has always had a passion for directing from the violin, and has worked in this capacity with Britten Sinfonia, Sinfonietta Rīga, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Cologne Chamber Orchestra and ACO Collective. Currently leader of Britten Sinfonia, Thomas also led Aurora Orchestra from 2005 to 2016.

As concerto soloist Thomas has performed internationally including with the LA Phil New Music Group, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, and in the UK, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Hallé, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Royal Scottish National Orchestra. Thomas has become known as an interpreter of new music, including solo works by Hans Abrahamsen, Thomas Adès, James MacMillan, Nico Muhly and Max Richter.

As a chamber musician and recitalist, Thomas has enjoyed partnerships with pianist Alasdair Beatson, cellist Adrian Brendel, accordionist Ksenija Sidorova, the Artea String Quartet (with whom Thomas has recorded quartets by Mendelssohn and Schubert on Champs Hill Records), and has performed as a guest with the Nash Ensemble. Thomas is a regular participant at IMS Prussia Cove and Dartington International Summer School.

Thomas is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied between 2001 and 2006 with Joji Hattori and György Pauk. He plays a 1782 G B Guadagnini violin.

Britten Sinfonia

Just over 25 years ago, Britten Sinfonia was established as a bold reimaging of the conventional image of an orchestra. A flexible ensemble comprising the UK's leading soloists and chamber musicians came together with a unique vision: to collapse the boundaries between old and new music, to collaborate with composers, conductors and guest artists across the arts, focusing on the musicians rather than following the vision of a principal conductor; and to create involving, intelligent music events that both audiences and performers experience with an unusual intensity.

The orchestra is named after Benjamin Britten, in part a homage to its chosen home of the East of England, where Britten's roots were also strong. But Britten Sinfonia also embodies its namesake's ethos. Its projects are illuminating and distinctive, characterised by their rich diversity of influences and artistic collaborators; and always underpinned by a commitment to uncompromising quality, whether the orchestra is performing in New York's Lincoln Center or in Lincolnshire's Crowland Abbey. Britten Sinfonia musicians are deeply rooted in the communities with which they work, with an underlying philosophy of finding ways to reach even the most excluded individuals and groups.

Today Britten Sinfonia is heralded as one of the world's leading ensembles and its philosophy of adventure and reinvention has inspired a new movement of emerging chamber groups. It is an Associate Ensemble at London's Barbican, Resident Orchestra at Saffron Hall in Essex and has residencies in Norwich and Cambridge. It performs an annual chamber music series at London's Wigmore Hall and appears regularly at major UK festivals including the Aldeburgh, Brighton, the Norfolk and Norwich Festivals and the BBC Proms.

Over the last year the orchestra has performed a live broadcast to more than a million people worldwide from the Sistine Chapel, toured to Amsterdam, Paris and Bilbao and in the 2019–20 season will be touring to the US, Mexico, China and much of Europe. It is a BBC Radio 3 Broadcast Partner and has award-winning recordings on the Hyperion and Harmonia Mundi labels.

Recent and current collaborators include Keaton Henson, dancer/choreographer Pam Tanowitz and theatre director Ivo van Hove, with commissions from Thomas Adès, Gerald Barry, Shiva Feshareki, Emily Howard, Brad Mehldau and Mark-Anthony Turnage. The orchestra was a commissioning partner in a ground-breaking partnership between minimalist composer Steve Reich and visual artist Gerhard Richter in a new work that was premiered in October.

Outside the concert hall, Britten Sinfonia musicians work on creative and therapeutic projects with pre-school children, teenagers, young carers, people suffering from dementia, life-time prisoners and older people at risk of isolation. The orchestra's annual OPUS competition offers unpublished composers the chance to receive a professional commission and unearths new, original and exciting UK compositional talent. Members of Britten Sinfonia Academy, the orchestra's youth chamber ensemble for talented young performers, have performed in museums, improvised with laptop artists, led family workshops and appeared at Latitude Festival.

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