



Season 72 Preview:

The 2013 /14 Marlborough College Concert Series returns on Sunday, September 15th at 7:30pm in the Memorial Hall, when the **Sacconi Quartet** will perform works by Beethoven, Britten and Haydn.

The following month, on Sunday, 6th October (also at 7:30pm), **Freddy Kempf** will give a recital featuring great works for piano, including Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an exhibition*.



Freddy Kempf

BBC National Orchestra of Wales join us at the half way point in the series, under the direction of Guest Conductor **Jac van Steen** – very much a favourite with our audience on his last visit two years ago.

On Sunday, 3rd November, the orchestra will present a programme very much tilted towards Stravinsky, including the *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto*, and the full ballet music suite from *Puccinella*, plus the *Sinfonia Concertante* by Mozart.

Benny Kim (violin) and **Philip Dukes** (viola) will feature as soloists.

Then, in the New Year on Sunday, 12th January, we welcome back **Fretwork** (viols consort) who thrilled us on their last visit. Accompanied by lutenist **Elizabeth Kenny** and tenor **Ian Bostridge**, they will perform a medley of works by the English Renaissance composer, John Dowland (1563-1626).

Finally, bringing the whole season to a glorious crescendo, on Sunday, 2nd February, **Southbank Sinfonia**, our very own *Orchestra in Partnership*, will reveal their new cohort of talented young musicians in a grande finale performing *Beethoven's Emperor Concerto*, and *Schubert's Great Symphony*. Alessio Bax will appear as soloist on piano.

You can read more about our forthcoming season in future editions of the newsletter. We look forward to welcoming you back to the series. ■

Sacconi recital will chart progress of the Quartet form

Sacconi Quartet was founded in 2001 by four graduates from the Royal College of Music (RCM), London. The ensemble, which retains its original line-up of Ben Hancox (violin), Hannah Dawson (violin), Robin Ashwell (viola) and Cara Berridge (cello) takes its name from the fabled 20th century violin maker and restorer, Simone Fernando Sacconi (1895-1973).

Sacconi will open their recital with a piece from Haydn's String Quartet, Op. 20 series – a collection of six individual compositions.

The series, which was written in 1772, is widely considered a milestone in the development of the quartet, in effect laying down compositional techniques that would define the medium for the next 200 years.

Hitherto, the first violin (occasionally both violins) tended to dominate in the quartet form, with the viola and cello providing accompaniment. Haydn's

Ben Hancox took up violin at the tender age of four. By the time he reached his teens, he was studying in Bonn and Madrid with Russian violinist Sergei Fatkouline. As an undergraduate, he won numerous prizes while studying under the tutelage of another eminent Russian violinist, Felix Andrievsky.

Hannah Dawson credits the late British violinist, Howard Davis (1940-2008) as her great inspiration. EMMY award winning film composer, Michael Omer wrote '*Moving as the restless spheres*' for her, after hearing her play at St John's Smith Square, in April 1998.

Robin Ashwell trained with Andreij Vjiltovitch and Ian Jewel. While at the RCM, he won all the major viola prizes, including the 'Cecil Aronowitz Prize,' and the 'Tagore Gold Medal,' (for outstanding achievements and contributions to college life). He is 'Head of Strings' at Westminster School, and also teaches privately.



Sacconi Quartet (L to R): Ben, Hannah, Robin, Cara

Photo © Clive Barda

innovation was to give each instrument its own voice – leading Goethe to liken the interplay between them to "four rational people conversing."

This is particularly evident in the Quartet No. 2 (C major) that we will hear in our recital. The cello introduces the composition – a feature that was practically

During her time at the RCM, **Cara Berridge** won many of the major cello prizes, including the 'Anna Shuttleworth Prize,' and the 'Helen Just Prize.' As an 'Amaryllis Fleming Scholar,' she received post-graduate diplomas with distinctions. She plays a Nicolaus Gagliano cello dating from 1781, and is grateful to the Royal Society of Musicians for the use of the instrument. ■

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unique at the time.

Haydn also uses the Op. 20 series to break a number of other conventions relating to the sonata form. The prevailing view of a sonata was a construction of three movements – an opening 'exposition,' a middle development section, and a final 'recapitulation.'

The exposition defines the compositional themes and motifs, while the developmental movement experiments with these themes, varying, combining and juxtaposing them in new ways. The recapitulation closes the loop musically, by unraveling and gradually re-stating all of the original themes.

In the Op. 20 series, Haydn permits the 'recapitulation' to advance the developmental elements still further – to the extent that the final movement is no longer a recapitulation.

Also on the programme is Beethoven's String Quartet No. 15, Op.132, though it is in fact his thirteenth in order of composition. This, along with two other quartets (Op. 127 /130) were commissioned by Count Nicolai Galitzin of St. Petersburg.

Throughout the winter of 1824-25, Beethoven suffered an intestinal disorder, which he feared might be fatal. The Op. 132 was written in the spring during his gradual recovery. The third movement (of five), captioned: "A Convalescent's Holy Song of Thanksgiving to the Divinity," expresses gratitude for his recovery. The work premièred in November of the same year.

This series of quartets further disturbed tradition, perplexing musicians and audiences alike – who variously described the piece as indecipherable.

Between the two, we will hear Britten's String Quartet, No.2 (in C major), Op. 36.

Though Britten was not considered a *natural* in the use of the sonata, when he did employ the form (as with the Op. 36), it was with much success and originality.

Britten ascribes the name "Chacony" to the third movement – a reference to the English baroque composer Henry Purcell, whose anniversary, (200 years since his death), Britten was seeking to commemorate.

Critics and scholars have described the recapitulation, (which embraces no fewer than 21 variations), as one of the finest *ground-bass* movements yet written for the string quartet.

What better way to mark the centenary of Britten's birth than a performance of this work on the opening night of our new season. ■

MacGregor charms Marlborough with a virtuoso performance

The fourth recital in the 2012 /13 Marlborough College Concert Series was given by the eminent British pianist Joanna MacGregor.

Very much a household name both at home and abroad, MacGregor is a musician of exceptional versatility and vitality.

Not content with a 'standard' solo career, she has broadened her musical horizons far beyond the norm (just check out her CV), embracing an extraordinary range of roles from Artistic Director of the Bath International Music Festival to her current role as Head of Keyboard Studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

It was however as a pure soloist that the MCCS welcomed MacGregor back (this was her third visit) and she didn't disappoint. This was a recital of great sophistication and maturity and although some of her perhaps more unusual quirks have melted away, it was no less absorbing or engaging; on the contrary, the music came first and the audience enjoyed every minute of it.

The programme was a Beethoven sandwich – the bread being the Beethoven with a filling of Bartok and Brahms. There was nothing stodgy however about the Beethoven – indeed it was both electrifying and bristling with the necessary fibre with excellent articulation and drama firmly on display, whilst the Bartok offered a magnificent, spicy contrast.

The highlight? For my taste the Brahms Drei Intermezzi. Exquisite music played by an artist with remarkable insight and sympathy, totally at the mercy of the text.

The delightful encores of Nancarrow and Sophia Gubaidulina were an eccentric end to a memorable concert.

**Philip Dukes FGSM Hon ARAM
(Artistic Director)**

Southbank Sinfonia shows off this year's talent

The MCCS 2012/13 season came to a triumphant close with a performance by Marlborough College's professional orchestra in partnership, London's Southbank Sinfonia.

A regular feature in the series over the last five years or so (and in the College's musical calendar too) they bring a youthful and refreshing zest to the series, enjoyed to the full by a packed Memorial Hall.

Now in its 11th year, the Southbank Sinfonia has established itself as an orchestra of considerable talent and vision under the inspirational direction of conductor Simon Over.

For this concert they were joined by the fabulous young British clarinetist Julian Bliss. Still only 23 years old, Bliss is a remarkable player, and his rendition of Mozart's sublime Clarinet Concerto was brimming with musicality and an enviable maturity for a performer so young.

Either side of the Mozart was Tchaikovsky – firstly the rather curious Capriccio Italien; and following the interval the magnificent, evergreen 5th Symphony. The symphony was a perfect opportunity for the Southbank Sinfonia to show case both its individual and collective brilliance – there were notable contributions

from Principal Horn Charles Hutchinson, flautist Luke Russell and bassoonist Christina Marroni amongst others, admirably backed by some sizzling string playing.

An interesting dimension was the invitation by the Southbank Sinfonia to include Lower Sixth Music Scholar Sophie Lawson Turnbull as a guest percussionist in the Overture – an experience that will live long in her memory no doubt.

The Southbank Sinfonia will return to the College later this week for a series of workshops, recitals and rehearsals culminating in a gala side by side performance with College ensembles. Another treat in store from this inspirational ensemble.

**Philip Dukes FGSM Hon ARAM
(Artistic Director)**

