



MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE

CONCERT SERIES

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2013

Introducing the new season ...

Marlborough College Concert Series returns this month with the first of five stunning programmes bringing world class musicians to our stage in the Memorial Hall.

In what promises to be another spectacular season, we will host two fine orchestras, two string ensembles, and numerous soloists.

This weekend (15-Sept-13, at 7:30pm) marks the opening night, when we welcome **Sacconi Quartet**. In a recital illuminating the evolution of the 'quartet' form, from 1770s Europe to the mid 20th century, the ensemble will perform works by Haydn, Beethoven, and Britten.

Then, on the first Sunday of next month (06-Oct-13, at 7:30pm), internationally acclaimed soloist **Freddy Kempf** will perform piano favourites including 'Symphonic Etudes' by Schumann, 'Pictures at an Exhibition' (Mussorgsky), and Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op. 109.

At the midway point of the series (03-Nov-13, at 7:30pm), **BBC National Orchestra of Wales** are sure to delight our audience with ballet music by Stravinsky (the complete score of 'Pulcinella'), and Mozart's 'Sinfonia Concertante.'

And in early New Year (12-Jan-14, at 3:00pm), **Fretwork** – consort of viols will present a selection of music and songs by John Dowland (1563-1626). Accompanying the ensemble will be **Ian Bostridge** (tenor) and **Elizabeth Kenny** (lute).

Finally, to close the 72nd season (02-Feb-14, at 3:00pm), we will once again receive **Southbank Sinfonia**, our 'orchestra in partnership,' for a suitably rousing finale comprising Beethoven's 'Emperor Concerto' (soloist: **Alessio Bax**), and Schubert's Symphony No. 9 ('the Great').

So, that is five dates for your diaries, for which we hope you agree, there is much to look forward to.

Do join us if you can and enjoy five great performances of immense variety, performed by world class musicians – all for sharing with friends in the warmth and intimacy of the Memorial Hall. ■



Jac van Steen – Principal Guest Conductor

Live broadcast on BBC Radio 3 is a first for the Memorial Hall

BBC orchestra to present a Stravinsky-inspired programme at the half way point in the series – with a rare opportunity to hear the full ballet music suite to Pulcinella.

BBC National Orchestra of Wales occupies a very special role as both a national and broadcasting orchestra.

Since January 2009, it has been based at Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff Bay, in the Wales Millennium Centre, where it enjoys state of the art rehearsal and recording studio facilities.

Although the hall has the ability to cope with large choral and orchestral forces, and has an audience seating capacity of around 350, concerts are more frequently performed in the nearby St David's Hall, where the company is *Orchestra-in-Residence*.

As well as touring internationally, the Orchestra performs every year at the BBC Proms and biennially at BBC Cardiff Singer of the World. Thanks to its close working relationships with radio and tv programme-makers, the company is credited with numerous BBC soundtrack recordings, including the Doctor Who theme, and the Human Planet series.

While the Orchestra has a reputation for bringing freshness to the core repertoire, it is also adventurous in its choice of programming, showcasing new and rarely performed works.

During the past two years, it has premiered works by Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, and British composers Simon Holt and Mark Bowden. And recent recordings have included symphonies number two and six by David Matthews.

This Autumn, BBC National Orchestra of Wales returns to the Memorial Hall for a live broadcast under the direction of Principal Guest Conductor, Jac van Steen. Regular subscribers to the college concert series may recall his warmth and sensitivity when the Orchestra last came to Marlborough, in February 2012.

Aside from his appointment with BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Jac van Steen is Music Director of Dortmund

[Page 2, Column 2]

Kempf back in town!



Photo © Neda Navae (for IMG Artists)

Freddy Kempf first came to prominence in the UK in 1992, when he won “BBC Young Musician of the Year.” But it was a controversy at the Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition, six years later in Moscow that helped to establish his international reputation.

The award of third place, rather than first prize provoked protests from the audience, stimulating an outcry in the Russian press who proclaimed him “*the hero of the competition*.” Since then, he has enjoyed unprecedented popularity with Russian audiences, playing to sell-out concerts and performing on national state television.

Exceptionally gifted with an unusually broad repertoire, Freddy is one of the most successful international pianists of his generation, much reknown for an explosive and physical performance style. And you can see him on stage in the Memorial Hall on Sunday, 6th October at 7:30pm.

He will open with Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 30 in E major, Op. 109. Then to follow will be Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes*, a set of nine variations based on a theme originally composed by the amateur musician, Baron von Fricken.

After the interval, Freddy will resume with an early work by Schumann, the notoriously difficult Toccata Op.7.

Schumann described the work as the “*hardest piece ever written*,” and reputedly injured his hands while trying to master the opening theme. Finally, to bring the recital to a dramatic close, Freddy will play Mussorgsky's magnificent *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

A committed recitalist, Freddy has performed in many of the world's important venues. Last season, he toured the UK with St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra, and in the spring of this year, performed with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall, before making return visits to Russia and Finland. Make sure you catch him when he comes to Marlborough! ■

National Orchestra of Wales [from Page 1, Column 3]

Philharmoniker, which last year celebrated its 125th anniversary. He brings to our stage a programme of works by Mozart and Stravinsky.

Opening the performance we will hear the Concerto in E-flat by Stravinsky.

Commissioned by wealthy American diplomat Robert Woods Bliss and his wife to celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary, it takes its name “Dumbarton Oaks,” from their 54 acre estate in Upper Georgetown, Washington, DC.

Inspired by Bach's Brandenburg concertos, it has three short movements and was completed in March 1938, while the composer was in Paris.

Bliss, then retired would surely have noted Stravinsky's rise to prominence in 1907/08, while he was based in the composer's birth city, St. Petersburg. At the time, Stravinsky was premièring some of his early works, which were so well received that Diaghilev invited him to write for the Ballets Russes commissioning “The Firebird” and “Rite of Spring.”

The concerto premièred on May 8th, 1938, in the Great Hall of Dumbarton Oaks, though not as planned under the direction of the composer. Stravinsky absented himself due to illness, asking his friend the legendary music instructor Nadia Boulanger to conduct in his place. She was in America at the time, guest conducting with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and was delighted to fulfil the request.

The Blissés had to wait a further nine years to hear the piece conducted by its originator, but it must have been worth the wait because they invited him back for a repeat performance in 1958, on the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary.

Before the interval, we change moods with Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola and Orchestra, in E-flat major (K 364).

The term *sinfonia concertante* suggests a kind of hybrid between the symphony form and the concerto – the latter featuring one or more soloists. As a genre, it began to emerge during the second half of the 18th Century in

response to the growing technical competence of European orchestras, and an appetite for more structural complexity.

Written during 1779 while Mozart was touring Europe, it is considered to be one of his most successful realisations of the genre. Philip Dukes (viola) and Benny Kim (violin) will be the soloists for this performance.

After the interval, the concert resumes with Stravinsky's complete score for the ballet Pulcinella.

This was another commission by Sergei Diaghilev who was preparing the ballet to première in Paris in 1920. Costumes and sets were designed by Pablo Picasso, while the choreography and libretto were devised by the legendary dancer Léonide Massine.

It is a tale of courtships involving Pulcinella and his girlfriend Pimpinella, and two other couples, and is typical of Neopolitan stage comedies dating from the early 18th century.

Florindo and Cloviello set the scene, serenading two young women Prudenza and Rosetta, who characteristically appear unimpressed, before Prudenza's father chases them away.

A new episode follows in which Rosetta dances for Pulcinella and they kiss. But the kiss is seen by Pimpinella!

It coincides with the return of Florindo and Cloviello, who give Pulcinella a beating.

Later, Pulcinella feigns death through a stabbing before being brought back to life by his friend Furbo, disguised as a magician. Pimpinella forgives Pulcinella, and the women succumb to the advances of Florindo and Cloviello. The ballet ends with the marriage of all three couples.

The significance of the piece is that it marks a transition between Stravinsky's early works and a new phase in his musical development – away from the Russian Nationalistic School (and the influence of his mentor Rimsky-Korsakov) towards a neo-classical style characterised by an emphasis on balance, clarity, economy, and emotional restraint.

Soprano Elizabeth Atherton, tenor Benjamin Hulett, and bass Matthew Brook will interpret the character roles. ■



Soloist: Philip Dukes