



ST JOHN'S SMITH SQUARE

St John's Smith Square – Welcome Back!

The return of public concerts to a socially distanced audience.

Following a successful pilot concert with a live audience in July, St John's Smith Square are delighted to be able to welcome audiences back to enjoy live performances this Autumn. Between now and the end of 2020 a programme of **63 public concerts** is planned. There will also be **50 digital events** as part of the St John's **DIGITAL EXCHANGE** programme, some of which are hybrid versions of concerts featured in the live programme and some of which are bespoke events created specifically for our digital audience. The **35th Christmas Festival**, running from **8th to 23rd December**, will include 22 public concerts, whilst the inaugural digital '**Christmas Festival London**' will feature content from these live concerts alongside specially created material and will run from the 8th December through to 5th January 2021. The programme for November and December (including the Christmas Festival) will be announced in full on 5th October, whilst the programme for the month of October, consisting of 21 public concerts and 17 digital events is launched today (Tuesday 15th September).

The October programme includes a wide range of orchestral and chamber music along with solo recitals. The regular lunchtime concert series resumes, the **Digital Exchange** series (made possible by public funding from The National Lottery through Arts Council England) continues – including a new strand of '**Song from St John's**', the Beethoven string quartet cycle concludes with the late quartets, and there is a welcome return for the **Occupy the Pianos** festival.

The month commences with a lunchtime concert from soprano **Siân Dicker** accompanied by **Krystal Tunnicliffe** and organised in conjunction with the Oxford Lieder Festival. In the first of two concerts by pianist **Mark Bebbington**, with the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** and conductor **Jan Latham-Koenig**, baritone **Roderick Williams** is the guest in an effervescent programme of French repertoire. **The Revolutionary Drawing Room** will be concluding their three-year cycle of the Beethoven string quartets, featuring the complete late quartets over two weekends and including a new work by the composer **Rachel Stott**. **James Platt** (bass) and **Michael Pugh** (piano) continue the '**Song from St John's**' series, which will also feature on exclusive online performance of Messiaen's 'Harawi' by soprano **Lotte Betts-Dean** and SJSS Young Artist, **Joseph Havlat** (piano). Following a recording residency in September, **The English Concert**, directed by **Kristian Bezuidenhout** give a star-studded programme of Purcell Odes. Historically informed performance continues as a focus in a recital by horn player **Anneke Scott** with the **Consone Quartet**. Having launched the **Digital Exchange** programme back in July with

our pilot concert featuring a live audience, organised in conjunction with the DCMS, **The Gesualdo Six** (previous SJSS Young Artists) give two performances with the trumpeter **Matilda Lloyd** including one where audiences are invited to simply 'pay what they can afford'. The **Young Musician's Symphony Orchestra** make a welcome return with a programme of Wagner and Beethoven. The wonderful Klais organ at St John's is featured in a recital by the sub-organist of Westminster Abbey, **Peter Holder** whilst St John's status as a still consecrated church is marked with a Sung Eucharist to mark the feast day of the patron saint of Westminster, St Edward the Confessor. Virtuoso pianist **Rolf Hind** with the incredible vocal talent of **Loré Lixenberg**, along with digital artist **Sasha Balmazi-Owen** launch the next instalment in our contemporary festival, **Occupy the Pianos**, featuring the world premiere of an SJSS commission from composer **Elaine Mitchener**. A previous SJSS commission is featured in **The Minerva Piano Trio's** (SJSS Young Artists 2016/17) performance of David Knott's arrangement of Ravel's Daphnis and Chloe, whilst current SJSS Young Artists, **Improviso** offer a programme based around the ever popular 'Folia'. Prior to this concert **Improviso** will be leading an online workshop, introducing the art of improvisation and inviting musicians to join them online in a digital improvisation based on 'La Folia'. Another of SJSS's current young artists, the pianist **Joseph Havlat**, will give a recital of Czech piano music by Dvořák and his son-in-law, Suk whilst the month comes to a close with two concerts by the **Chineke! Chamber Ensemble**, presenting music by Vaughan-Williams and Schubert alongside the Four American Spirituals of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

Richard Heason, Director of St John's Smith Square says "Since we closed our doors at the end of the concert on 16th March we have been focussing our energy and efforts on finding a route back towards live music taking place in St John's Smith Square once again. We are delighted that we are able now to safely welcome audiences back, albeit in a measured and controlled way, and that we can share the joy of live music. We are immensely grateful to all those who have supported us so generously throughout the period of lockdown including individuals who made donations or gifted the value of tickets they were holding for events no longer able to happen, and Arts Council England who enabled the launch of our Digital Exchange programme with a grant from the Emergency Response Fund (crucial support, both financially and as a boost to our confidence at a very dark time). We also thank all the artists who have collaborated with such open generosity over recent weeks and months and who have committed themselves so fully to these re-opening plans. We look forward, now, to welcoming back our audiences, for whom we exist, whilst continuing to support those unable to join us yet through our Digital Exchange programme."

The health and safety of our audience, artists and staff is of paramount importance and we have worked extensively to ensure St John's Smith Square is a 'Covid Secure' venue for all those attending events. In line with the latest Government guidance, we have carried out a thorough risk assessment and made changes to the way we operate. Our aim is to minimise exposure to risk as far as possible so that everyone can focus on enjoying the music.

Our new safety measures include:

- Reduced audience numbers and socially-distanced seating (our maximum capacity is less than 20% of our pre-pandemic capacity)

- Increased and enhanced cleaning between and during events, including regular anti-viral and anti-bacterial fogging
- A one-way system and queue management
- All concerts are without an interval
- Mandatory temperature checks on entry to the building
- Automated non-contact hand sanitiser stations
- Asking all visitors to wear face-coverings (unless exempt)
- Providing PPE to our staff
- Audience entry and exit via portico doors (with lift access as usual for patrons with limited mobility)
- Regular ventilation of the hall
- Digital or 'print at home' ticketing
- Entry for pre-booked tickets only

St John's Smith Square will continue to review the situation and adapt these measures where necessary to respond to any changes in Government guidance. Full information, along with FAQs can be found on our website.

15 September 2020