

LONDON
FESTIVAL OF
BAROQUE
MUSIC
2017



London Festival of Baroque Music: *Baroque at the Edge*

12-20 May 2017

St John's Smith Square / St Peter's Eaton Square / Westminster Abbey

Press Release

Featuring: Early Opera Company & Christian Curnyn with Lucy Crowe and Tim Mead; Jean Rondeau; Florilegium & Ashley Solomon with Elin Manahan Thomas; Jasmin Toccata; Vox Luminis and the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra; The Choir of Westminster Abbey & St James's Baroque; Les Passions de l'Ame & Meret Lüthi; I Fagiolini & Robert Hollingworth; European Union Baroque Orchestra & Lars Ulrik Mortensen; Holst Singers & the Academy of Ancient Music

Plus: 3 'Future Baroque' young artist lunchtime concerts; talks; 'Sing Baroque' Monteverdi and Handel choral workshop

'London's leading festival of early music' Financial Times

'Probably London's best-loved annual celebration of early music' The Independent

'The Festival's become an indispensable part of the capital's cultural landscape.'

On **9 January 2017** the London Festival of Baroque Music (formerly the Lufthansa Festival of Baroque Music) announced its programme for 2017. The Festival theme for 2017 is '**Baroque at the Edge**'. Inspired by the anniversaries of Monteverdi (450th of birth) and Telemann (250th of death) the Festival explores the ways that composers and performers have pushed at the chronological, stylistic, geographical and expressive boundaries of the Baroque era.

Artistic Director Lindsay Kemp said: *"This year's two anniversary composers come from opposite ends of the Baroque era, which got me thinking about ways in which musical styles and tastes change over time. At times such as the transition from Renaissance to Baroque around 1600, and from Baroque to Classical around 1750, change can come quickly and different styles end up jostling with each other. These corners of music history, and the whole idea of blurred edges and crossed boundaries, is what has given us our Festival theme this year."*

This year there are 13 concerts over 9 days, with highlights including Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* from the stellar partnership of Belgian vocal ensemble Vox Luminis and the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra; the Pergolesi *Stabat mater* with Early Opera Company under Christian Curnyn with soloists Lucy Crowe and Tim Mead; Telemann's cantata *Ino* with Florilegium and Elin Manahan Thomas; Monteverdi's *Orfeo* with I Fagiolini and Robert Hollingworth; Handel's *Jephtha* with the Holst Singers and the Academy of Ancient

Music under Stephen Layton; string-ensemble music by Biber, Schmelzer and Fux from Swiss ensemble Les Passions de l'Ame (with Turkish percussion!); and a harpsichord recital (entitled 'Vertigo') by Jean Rondeau.

Monteverdi's iconic *Vespers of 1610* is a classic example of a work at the edge, juxtaposing the newest musical techniques of the early Baroque with the older methods of the Renaissance. Ultimately this makes it not just a work of stylistic reconciliation but also one of unparalleled expressive richness. On Sunday 14 May at 7.30pm, this glorious music will be performed by two top-class ensembles, both of whom have made strong impressions at the Festival in the past: Belgian vocal ensemble **Vox Luminis** and the **Freiburg Baroque Orchestra**, coming together for the first time for this project.

Like the *Vespers*, Monteverdi's first opera *Orfeo* has one foot in the world of Baroque vocal expression and the other in Renaissance traditions, in this case those of court entertainment and madrigal. But it is also music history's first great opera, a work of power, depth and beauty that never ceases to enthrall. Written for Monteverdi's own regular vocal ensemble, it will be performed on Thursday 18 May at 7.45pm at St John's Smith Square by Monteverdi masters **I Fagiolini** in their 30th anniversary year, with the brilliant **Matthew Long** as the virtuosic demi-God of singing, and a full cast of singers with a strong background in Monteverdi's secular and sacred music. Directed by **Robert Hollingworth**, it is given in an imaginative semi-staging by Thomas Guthrie that was first performed by I Fagiolini in Venice in 2015.

Opening this year's festival on Friday 12 May at 7.30pm at St John's Smith Square is the **Early Opera Company**, under the musical direction of **Christian Curnyn**, with Pergolesi's exquisite and profoundly moving *Stabat mater*, with soprano **Lucy Crowe** and countertenor **Tim Mead** as soloists. Pergolesi was one of the 18th century's most influential and admired composers, and did much to power the stylistic transition from the Baroque to the Classical style in music. Curnyn and his superb ensemble also include more music from the late Baroque cutting edge with fire-cracker modernistic orchestral pieces by WF and CPE Bach.

On Saturday 13 May at 4pm at St Peter's Eaton Square, rising virtuoso **Jean Rondeau** (*'One of the most natural performers one is likely to hear on a classical music stage these days ... a master of his instrument.'* Washington Post) explores the flamboyant, poetic and compelling fantasy world of the French harpsichord repertoire, with character pieces, preludes and dances music by two of its most brilliant exponents, Jean-Philippe Rameau and Panrace Royer.

On the evening of Saturday 13 May at 7.00pm at St John's Smith Square, leading British ensemble **Florilegium** focus on one of 2017's great anniversary composers, Georg Philipp Telemann. Their concert puts Telemann the man of the High Baroque up against Telemann the progressive with two works from his final decade, including a powerful late masterpiece, the extraordinary and dramatic cantata *Ino*. This work is rarely heard in concert so this is an exceptional opportunity to experience it sung by **Elin Manahan Thomas**. Before it Florilegium perform one of the enduring favourites of the Baroque concerto repertoire – Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 5.

The London Festival of Baroque Music's annual visit to Westminster Abbey on Tuesday 16 May at 7pm honours Bach's late masterpiece, his *Mass in B Minor*, compiled and adapted in his final years from earlier works and seemingly devised as a summation of his life's work as a composer of sacred music. From joy to grief, celebration to supplication and triumph to penitence this is one the great monuments of Western music. It will be performed by **The Choir of Westminster Abbey** and **St James's Baroque** under **James O'Donnell**.

Swiss string ensemble **Les Passions de l'Ame** give their UK full concert debut on Wednesday 17 May at 7.30pm at St John's Smith Square, under their violinist director Meret Lüthi. Their programme is entitled 'Edge of Europe', and presents string music from 17th-century Austria, at that time Christian Europe's interface with the Ottoman Empire. The music, by Schmelzer, Biber, Fux and Walther is imaginative and often quirky, enhanced in Les Passions de l'Ame's performance by the colourful addition of Turkish percussion.

There's another meeting of cultures in the 9.30pm 'Late o'Clock Baroque' concert on Saturday 13 May at St John's Smith Square, when harpsichordist Jean Rondeau makes his second appearance of the Festival, this time in the company of lutenist Thomas Dunford and classical Persian percussionist Keyvan Chemirani. All three musicians are superb improvisers, and in a project they have entitled 'Jasmin Toccata' they meld Persian percussion and Baroque instruments in imaginative transformations of European masters such as Scarlatti and Purcell and major composers from the Persian tradition. The result (in their words) is 'a vivid toccata that echoes the sensuality of Jasmin'.

The Festival's focus on young artists continues this year with three more Future Baroque lunchtime concerts at St John's Smith Square featuring some of the best new talent on the Baroque music scene. This year there are concerts by two instrumental groups: Ensemble Molière in a programme of music by Telemann and his French friends Blavet, Guignon and Forqueray (Friday 12 May at 1.05pm); and Ensemble Hesperis, who will be introducing us to music from 18th-century Scotland (Wednesday 17 May at 1.05pm). The third and final concert is a solo harpsichord recital by Nathaniel Mander, who will perform works by English composers from Byrd to JC Bach (Friday 19 May at 1.05pm).

On Friday 19 May at 7.30pm at St John's Smith Square the youthful talents of the **European Union Baroque Orchestra** return, with their regular Music Director **Lars Ulrik Mortensen**. Their programme of concertos, cantatas and arias by Bach and Handel explores the fringes of love, betrothal and betrayal, helped out by Swedish soprano **Maria Keohane**, also making a happy return to the Festival.

The Festival ends on Saturday 20 May at 7.00pm at St John's Smith Square with a performance of Handel's last, and in many people's opinion best, dramatic oratorio *Jephtha*. **Stephen Layton** conducts the **Holst Singers**, the **Academy of Ancient Music** and a fine cast of young singers led by Nick Pritchard as the Israelite warrior who lives to regret a rash vow to God.

In addition to these concerts, the Festival also features 'Sing Baroque', a special amateur choral workshop with conductor **Robert Howarth** on Sunday 14 May at 10.30am. Suitable for aspiring Baroque singers of all levels of ability and experience, the workshop will explore selected choruses from two of this year's Festival pieces, Monteverdi's *Vespers* and Handel's *Jephtha*.

To quote Lindsay Kemp again: "As ever it has been enormous fun to create a Festival around an unusual theme, one that allows us to programme rarely heard but deserving music alongside familiar works that reveal themselves in new and particular contexts. It shows just how deep, complex and varied Baroque music can be!"

<http://www.lfbm.org.uk/>

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For further information please contact:

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Listings and booking information

London Festival of Baroque Music 2017

General booking opens on Monday 6 February.

www.sjss.org.uk/ / Box Office: 020 7222 1061

FRIDAY 12 MAY

St John's Smith Square

1.05pm

Future Baroque 1

Ensemble Molière

This year's young artist platform opens with a highly regarded chamber ensemble formed by members of the Dartington International Summer School, who perform works by Telemann and his French friends Blavet, Guignon and Forqueray.

Ticket £15 (unreserved)

St John's Smith Square

6.00pm

Festival Talk

Composing at the Edge

Festival Artistic Director Lindsay Kemp explores how this year's two anniversary composers – Monteverdi and Telemann – reflected their changing musical times.

Free ticketed event

St John's Smith Square

7.30pm

Forward Baroque

Early Opera Company

Lucy Crowe soprano

Tim Mead counter-tenor

Christian Curnyn harpsichord/ organ & director

W. F. Bach - Adagio and Fugue (from Sinfonia in D minor, Fk 65)

Monn - Symphony

in B major

W. F. Bach - Duet for 2 flutes

in E minor, Fk 54

C. P. E. Bach - Symphony

in B minor, Wq 182/5

Pergolesi - Stabat mater

The Early Opera Company brings music from the late Baroque cutting edge to open this year's Festival, including urgently expressive works by two of J. S. Bach's forward-looking sons, and the delicious agony of grief that is Pergolesi's *Stabat mater*, an acknowledged masterpiece by one of the 18th century's most influential composers.

Tickets £45, £36, £27, £20

SATURDAY 13 MAY

St Peter's Eaton Square

4.00pm

Vertigo

Jean Rondeau harpsichord

Rising virtuoso Jean Rondeau explores the flamboyant, poetic and compelling fantasy world of the late-flourishing French harpsichord repertoire, with character pieces, preludes and dance music by two of its most brilliant exponents, Jean-Philippe Rameau and Pancrace Royer.

Tickets £20 (unreserved)

St John's Smith Square

7.00pm

Whither shall I fly?

Florilegium

Elin Manahan Thomas soprano

Ashley Solomon flute & director

Telemann - Overture-Suite in F major, TWV55:F16
Bach - Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D major, BWV 1050
Telemann - Cantata: Ino

Telemann the man of the High Baroque and Telemann the progressive eye each other in two works from his final decade, culminating in his powerful late masterpiece, the extraordinary and dramatic soprano cantata *Ino*. In between, the ever-popular Florilegium performs one of the enduring favourites of the Baroque concerto repertoire.

Tickets £40, £32, £25, £20

St John's Smith Square
9.30pm

Jasmin Toccata
Late O'Clock Baroque
Jean Rondeau harpsichord
Thomas Dunford lute
Keyvan Chemirani oriental percussion & director

An inspirational meeting of European Baroque and traditional Persian musical worlds, as three highly talented improvising musicians juxtapose 16th and 17th-century masters such as Scarlatti, Purcell and Dowland with virtuoso Persian compositions of sublime rhythmic richness.

Tickets £15 (unreserved)

SUNDAY 14 MAY

St John's Smith Square
10.30am

Sing Baroque
Robert Howarth conductor

Join Robert Howarth for a special singing workshop in which you'll learn and be coached in selected choruses from Monteverdi's *Vespers* and Handel's *Jephtha*. Suitable for aspiring Baroque singers of all levels of ability and experience. The workshop lasts 2½ hours with a short break, and we supply the sheet music and the refreshments. All you need to bring is your voice and your intent!

Tickets £15

St John's Smith Square
7.30pm

Monteverdi Ancient and Modern 1: Vespers of 1610
Vox Luminis
Freiburg Baroque Orchestra

Monteverdi's iconic *Vespers of 1610* juxtaposes the newest musical techniques of the early Baroque with the older methods of the Renaissance, making it both a work of stylistic reconciliation and one of unparalleled richness. It is presented for us by an exciting pairing of first-rank vocal and instrumental ensembles, performing together for the first time.

Tickets £50, £40, £30, £20

TUESDAY 16 MAY

Westminster Abbey
7.00pm

J. S. Bach Mass in B minor
The Choir of Westminster Abbey
St James' Baroque
James O'Donnell conductor

Our annual visit to Westminster Abbey honours Bach's late masterpiece, compiled and adapted in his final years from earlier pieces and seemingly devised as a summation of his life's work as a composer of sacred music. From joy to grief, celebration to supplication and triumph to penitence, this is one of the great monuments of Western music.

Tickets £45, £36, £27, £20 & £16 (restricted view), £12 (no view)

WEDNESDAY 17 MAY

St John's Smith Square
1.05pm

Future Baroque 2

Ensemble Hesperii

A bright new duo of recorder and harpsichord, formed at the Royal College of Music, performs music from 18th-century Scotland, including works by Oswald, Corelli, Geminiani and Barsanti.

Tickets £15 (unreserved)

St John's Smith Square
7.30pm

Edge of Europe

Les Passions de l'Ame
Meret Lüthi violin & director

Works by Biber, Schmelzer, Fux and Walther

The string-ensemble repertoire of 17th-century Austria and Bohemia – Christian Europe's interface with the Ottoman Empire – produced some of the most exuberantly quirky and imaginative music of the Baroque era. Swiss ensemble Les Passions de l'Ame is known for its high-spirited performances and here makes its UK full concert debut.

Tickets £35, £30, £25, £20

THURSDAY 18 MAY

St John's Smith Square
6.15pm

Pre concert-talk

Robert Hollingworth talks to Lindsay Kemp about Monteverdi and *L'Orfeo*.

Admission free to ticket-holders for the 7.45pm concert

St John's Smith Square
7.45pm

Monteverdi Ancient and Modern 2: L'Orfeo (semi-staged)

Matthew Long Orfeo
Rachel Ambrose Evans Euridice
Clare Wilkinson Proserpina
Ciara Hendrick Messenger
William Purefoy Speranza
Nicholas Hurndall Smith Apollo
Greg Skidmore Infernal Spirit
Charles Gibbs Plutone
Christopher Adams Caronte

I Fagiolini
The English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble
Robert Hollingworth director
Thomas Guthrie stage director

Masters of Monteverdi, I Fagiolini bring us the composer's first opera in a creative semi-staging. *L'Orfeo* is a work with feet both in the new world of Baroque vocal expression and in the older Renaissance traditions of court entertainment and madrigal, but it is also quite simply opera's first great masterpiece, a work of power, depth and beauty that never ceases to enthral.

Tickets £45, £36, £27, £20

FRIDAY 19 MAY

St John's Smith Square
1.05pm

Future Baroque 3

Nathaniel Mander harpsichord

The exciting young British harpsichordist, already a winner of several prestigious prizes, gives a recital of works by Byrd, Tomkins, Blow, J. C. Bach and Haydn.

Tickets £15 (unreserved)

St John's Smith Square
7.30pm

On the brink of love

European Union Baroque Orchestra
Maria Keohane soprano

Lars Ulrik Mortensen harpsichord & director

Handel - Concerto grosso in D minor, Op. 6 No. 10

Handel - 'Tu fedel? Tu costante?'

Handel - Passacaille in G minor

Handel - 'Ah! Ruggiero crudel ... Ombre pallide' (from *Alcina*)

J. S. Bach - Harpsichord Concerto in A major, BWV 1055

J. S. Bach - Cantata 'Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten', BWV 202 (Wedding Cantata)

A warm welcome back to the youthful talents of EUBO, this time with its regular Music Director Lars Ulrik Mortensen. Their Bach and Handel programme explores the fringes of love, betrothal and betrayal, helped out by Swedish soprano Maria Keohane, also making a happy return to the Festival.

Tickets £35, £20

SATURDAY 20 MAY

St John's Smith Square

7.00pm

Handel – Jephtha

Nick Pritchard Jephtha

Helen Charlston Storgè

Matthew Brook Zebul

James Hall Hamor

Mary Bevan Iphis

Rowan Pierce Angel

Holst Singers

Academy of Ancient Music

Stephen Layton conductor

Handel's last (and, many say, best) oratorio tells the story of the Israelite general who comes to regret a rash vow made to God. Despite being composed at a time of old age and failing eyesight, it is a work of immense dramatic power and searching character portrayal.

Tickets £45, £35, £25, £15

Notes to Editors

St John's Smith Square – History

The magnificent church of St John the Evangelist was designed by architect Sir Thomas Archer as part of the 'Commission for Building Fifty New Churches' of 1710, with construction lasting 14 years, from 1714 to 1728.

For over 200 years, St John's served as a parish church until the Blitz of 1941 when a direct hit from an incendiary bomb gutted the church. After the war local people funds were raised to buy the site and restore Archer's original designs and when the work was completed in 1969, St John's Smith Square was re-born as one of the finest concert halls in London.

There have been many other highlights over the years – the UK premiere of Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Stimmung* (with Stockhausen himself on sound projection); world premieres of works by Boulez, Birtwistle, Copland and Tippett by the London Sinfonietta; William Walton conducting his own 70th birthday concert; Pierre Boulez and Daniel Barenboim conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra; an 84-year-old Sir Adrian Boult conducting the English National Orchestra; and Morton Feldman performing alongside Harrison Birtwistle and John Tilbury for BBC Radio. St John’s has also hosted the Menuhin School Concert, featuring students Nigel Kennedy and Melvin Tan; a 21-year-old Simon Rattle with the Salomon Orchestra; Plácido Domingo, Teresa Berganza and Ileana Cotrubaş recording Bizet’s *Carmen* with Claudio Abbado and the LSO; Philip Glass giving a chamber organ recital, and Lutosławski conducting the Philharmonia in the London premiere of his *Symphony No. 2*.

Over 300 years old, St John’s continues to grow and thrive as a busy concert hall – a majestic building resounding to beautiful music in a serene city setting.

Box office: 020 7222 1061

www.sjss.org.uk