

Thames Concerts 2023/24 Series – Artistic Director's notes

It gives me great pleasure to present this series of concerts, showcasing a vibrant mix of talent. Our concerts continue to take place in the wonderful home of the series, St Andrew's Church, Surbiton.



Thames Concerts' position as the premier long-term promotor and organiser of high-quality chamber music performances in the Borough since 1961 remains unrivalled. Our attractive ticketing options and incentives continue of course, and the 10% discount scheme on the concert days continues at nearby establishments. All evening concerts start at 7.30pm, with doors (and the excellent value bar) opening at 6.45pm.

The series begins in style with the welcome return of **The Percussion Ensemble of London** on **Saturday 21 October**, comprising distinguished percussionists John Rockliffe, Sebastian Guard, Emily Eno, and Chris Nall. Their eclectic programme will include Salzedo's *Percussion Concerto* and Elliot Cole's groundbreaking *Postludes*, together with works by local composer Sebastian Guard. Audience members may recall the Ensemble's last appearance in the Thames Concerts series in 2014, in which they partnered with two pianos and choir in performances of Lambert's *The Rio Grande*, and the world premiere of the two-piano and percussion transcription of Dyson's *In Honour of the City*.

Also on **Saturday 21 October, 10.30am**, we hand over an admission-free morning concert slot to the fine Ukrainian brass ensemble **Freedom Pulse**. Formed by highly-regarded Ukrainian musicians now living and working locally, as well as undertaking regular national tours, they are a dynamic and entertaining ensemble. Please do come and support what will be a wonderful morning.

On **Saturday 11 November** we welcome pianist **Antonio Oyarzabal**, in *La Muse Oubliée*, a ravishing programme of music by women composers, a good deal taken from his acclaimed CD.

Saturday 9 December sees the return of series favourites **Cantabile (The London Quartet)**, presenting a typically varied seasonal and entertaining programme. I am delighted to join them at the piano for this concert, and welcome back bassist Mike Pratt to the line-up.

An organ recital has long been a feature of every series and taking us into 2024 is the esteemed concert organist and Director of Music at Jesus College Cambridge, **Benjamin Sheen**, on **Saturday 20 January**. This internationally-respected performer presents *In London Town*, a programme of British music to inspire.

The fifth evening concert in the series on **Saturday 3 February** sees a Musicians' Company Young Artist **Sabine Sergejeva** (violin) and her regular duo partner **Craig J White** (piano), in a programme of Bach, Debussy, Poulenc, Ravel and others.

The series will close on **Saturday 17 February** with a visit from the remarkable period ensemble **Endelienta Baroque**. Originally due to perform a couple of years ago, Covid-19 has meant this is the ensemble's postponed performance. They will present a programme of Baroque and contemporary music as part of their *Earthsong* project.

Thames Concerts enjoys a reputation for supporting young up-and-coming musical talent in the local community. This includes children from disadvantaged backgrounds, or who experience other barriers to participation. In 2015 I introduced admission-free Surbiton Farmers' Market Day coffee concerts, running parallel to the main evening series, intended to showcase these students and their work. Schools involved are free to present a programme of their choosing from any musical styles and genres. So far, many hundreds of students from over 15 local schools have taken part, and audiences are continually impressed by the high standard of performance they present.

This season we will be treated to performances from students studying with **Kingston Music Service** on **Saturday 16 December, 10.30am**, and for the first time, students from **Southborough High School** on **Saturday 20 January, 10.30am**.

Finally, I am delighted to let audience members know that from 2024 the annual Thames Concerts series will increase to *seven* evening performances and *four* mornings and will run from September to February. This natural expansion, while financially not without some risk, will enhance our flexibility and ability to continue to bring an eclectic mix of world-class performers to the series, and allow us to further promote the talent from the borough's schools and colleges.

On behalf of my fellow trustees, we look forward to meeting you at some point during the series. More details may of course be found as usual at www.thamesconcerts.com.

Ben Costello

27.vii.23