

Principal Artists

John Butt
Sir Mark Elder
Iván Fischer
Vladimir Jurowski
Sir Simon Rattle
Sir András Schiff

Emeritus Conductors

William Christie
Sir Roger Norrington

In a world gone mad, can great music help us see the light?

**Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's 2020-21 Southbank
Centre Season: The Edge of Reason**

Press Release: 20 February 2020

The Edge of Reason is part four of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's (OAE's) **Six Chapters of Enlightenment** – concert seasons at Southbank Centre, where the OAE is Resident Orchestra. The series is inspired by the golden age of science and philosophy that gave the Orchestra its name.

Crispin Woodhead, OAE Chief Executive, says:

"We're excited to be exploring the great arguments of the 18th century Enlightenment that still grip us today. Where do we find reason? What happens when we get to the edge of it – beyond it, even? What can the big debates and artworks of the past teach us as we stand, apparently, on the threshold of irrationality. The OAE is democratic, run by musicians who like to ask questions. This season, we look at where the boundaries of reason really lie with great works by Handel, Strauss, Schubert and others."

For many of their performances, whether in a concert hall or a pub (at its groundbreaking **The Night Shift** gigs), the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment introduces the music from the stage to share insights and connect with the audience. Playing on instruments the composer would have known and used, the players aim to make old works sound as new and fresh as when they were written.

A new multi-media interactive game show, **BAROQUEBUSTERS** (13 January, Queen Elizabeth Hall) revisits baroque favourites made famous through films, adverts, ring tones and synthesised pop songs. From Vivaldi's **The Four Seasons** to Bach's **Air on a G String**, the OAE asks what really lies behind the music's longstanding popularity.

Steven Devine, OAE Principal Keyboard, says:

“We’re going to be playing some famous baroque pieces as the composer wanted them to be heard, as well as looking at why they are so amazing and have stood the test of time. Despite, or even because of, all the crazy interpretations, we still love them. It’ll be a fun night out with some comedy thrown in for good measure – a genuinely different musical experience!”

The OAE will ask who really has moral authority in a secular world, as the season launches with **Handel’s *Solomon*** (20 October, Royal Festival Hall). Eminent Handelian **Christian Curnyn** directs a cast including countertenor **Iestyn Davies** and soprano **Lucy Crowe**, who joined the Orchestra in 2019 at Covent Garden for Handel’s ***Agrippina***. Young singers from the OAE’s current ***Rising Stars*** mentoring scheme join the chorus and scheme alumni **James Way** sings Zadok.

Later on in the season, the OAE will perform **Shostakovich’s** comedic **Concerto No.1 for Piano and Trumpet** and **Strauss’s** neo-classical ***Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*** (4 June, Queen Elizabeth Hall). OAE Principal Trumpet **David Blackadder** takes on the solo role in the Shostakovich Concerto and adventurous pianist **Alexander Melnikov** makes his OAE debut.

Crispin Woodhead says:

“The comic character of Monsieur Jourdain in Moliere’s play ***Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*** is central to *The Edge of Reason* theme. Blinded by the folly of social climbing, he would be a fool for all seasons were it not for the unmistakable thread of common sense that’s in there somewhere. He’s an idiot, but not a *complete* idiot. In him we see ourselves, struggling with the things we shouldn’t do, but do anyway.”

Conductor **Robin Ticciati** takes on composers who felt compelled to remain within certain parameters of logic and organisation, while doing everything to deceptively slip beyond them. There’ll be a rare performance of **Dvořák’s *Symphony No.8*** on gut strings and **Brahms’s *Violin Concerto*** is played by returning soloist **Alina Ibragimova** (8 December, Royal Festival Hall).

Cecelia Bruggemeyer, OAE Double Bass, says:

“It’s an exciting treat to play works like this on the instruments the composer wrote them for. Steeped as I am in baroque and classical repertoire, stepping forward in time to Dvořák and Brahms I feel the shock of the inventiveness of the romantic composers directly and viscerally; as close as I can get to hearing it anew, and experiencing the reaction of their first audiences. When you combine this sense of wonder with the exciting artistry of Ticciati and Ibragimova, and the spirit of joint enquiry from absolutely everyone on stage, there’s an electric energy of a new and unique creation for today.”

Other world-leading artists returning to the Orchestra include **OAE Emeritus Conductor Sir Roger Norrington** with **Schubert’s ‘Unfinished’ *Symphony No.9*** in Brian Newbould’s rarely heard ‘finished’ edition; **Nicola Benedetti** performing **Mendelssohn’s *Violin Concerto*** (22 February, Royal Festival Hall); tenor **Mark Padmore** overseeing a bold, no-conductor performance of **Bach’s *St Matthew Passion*** (16 March, Royal Festival Hall) and **Masaaki Suzuki** exploring plaintive music by Bach’s contemporaries (30 April, Queen Elizabeth Hall).

For further information, please contact:

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Note to Editors

Please find below the full list of concerts in the OAE's 20/21 Southbank Centre season:

Programme One – Handel's Solomon

Tuesday 20 October 2020, Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Handel – *Solomon*

Christian Curnyn – conductor
Iestyn Davies – countertenor
James Way – tenor
Lucy Crowe – soprano
Zoë Brookshaw – soprano
Neal Davies – baritone

Programme Two – Minor Miracles in the Age of Reason

Monday 23 November 2020, Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall

Kraus – Symphony in C minor
Mozart – Piano concert No. 23
Mozart – Symphony No. 25

Steven Devine – fortepiano

Programme Three – Bow to Reason

Tuesday 8 December 2020, Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Brahms – Violin Concerto
Dvořák – Symphony No. 8

Robin Ticciati – conductor
Alina Ibragimova – violin

Programme Four – BAROQUEBUSTERS

Wednesday 13 January 2021, Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall

Programme Five – Benedetti Plays Mendelssohn

Monday 22 February 2021, Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Cimarosa – *Il matrimonio segreto*: Overture
Mendelssohn – Violin Concerto
Schubert – Symphony No. 8, 'Unfinished' (Brian Newbold finished version)

Sir Roger Norrington – conductor
Nicola Benedetti – violin

Programme Six – St Matthew Passion

Tuesday 16 March 2021, Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Bach – *St Matthew Passion*

Mark Padmore – director/Evangelist

Samuel Hasselhorn – Christus

Mary Bevan – soprano

Rowan Pierce – soprano

Paula Murrihy – mezzo-soprano

Bethany Horak-Hallett – mezzo-soprano

Hugo Hymas – tenor

James Newby – baritone

Choir of the Age of Enlightenment

Programme Seven – De Profundis

Friday 30 April 2021, Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall

JS Bach – *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*

Buxtehude – Sonata for 2 violins, viola da gamba and basso continuo

Bruhns – *De Profundis*

Buxtehude – Trio Sonata in A minor

JS Bach – Aus der Tiefen

Masaaki Suzuki – musical director

Choir of the Age of Enlightenment

OAE Rising Star soloists

Programme Eight – The End of Reason

Friday 4 June 2021, Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall

Strauss – Capriccio: Sextet

Shostakovich – Piano Concerto No. 1

Strauss – *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*

Geoffrey Paterson – conductor

Alexander Melnikov – piano

David Blackadder – trumpet

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