

Bach's *Art of Fugue*

TRANSFORMATION

2024-25

Wednesday 14 May 2025 | 7.30pm

West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Thursday 15 May 2025 | 7.30pm

Milton Court Concert Hall, London

Charpentier's Actéon & Rameau's Pygmalion

Two mythological mini-masterpieces of baroque opera

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- Wednesday 9 October 2024 | Milton Court Concert Hall, London

Viennese Virtuosity: symphonies by Mozart, Haydn & friends

AAM celebrates a friendship that transformed music for ever

- Wednesday 13 November 2024 | West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge
- Thursday 14 November 2024 | Milton Court Concert Hall, London

Handel's Messiah

The great choral retelling of the life of Christ

- Monday 16 December 2024 | Barbican Hall, London

Italian Legacies: Geminiani & his English contemporaries

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Bach's Art of Fugue

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- Thursday 15 May 2025 | Milton Court Concert Hall, London

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony

The world's most famous symphony alongside Haydn's Trumpet Concerto

- Friday 27 June 2025 | Barbican Hall, London



ACADEMY OF
ANCIENT MUSIC

Bach's *Art of Fugue*

Written & directed by Bill Barclay
Produced by Concert Theatre Works

Peter Bray *actor*
Steffan Cennydd *actor*
Imogen Frances *actor*
Simon Slater *actor*

Academy of Ancient Music
Laurence Cummings *director & harpsichord*

Wednesday 14 May 2025 | 7.30pm
West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Thursday 15 May 2025 | 7.30pm
Milton Court Concert Hall, London

*The 2024-25 season has been generously
supported by the Arts and Humanities
Research Council*

*Bach's Art of Fugue performances
are supported by:
Maria Bjornson Memorial Fund
Continuo Foundation
The Polonsky Foundation*

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Associate Ensemble



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ORCHESTRA-IN-RESIDENCE

from John McMunn

chief executive

This evening, our 2024-25 Transformation season finally turns to the *ne plus ultra* of musical transformation, the fugue. No other form so elegantly expresses music's power to create fully formed worlds from the most economical of means, and no other composer than JS Bach has so fully explored and exploited the near-infinite possibilities contained (paradoxically) within its tightly circumscribed bounds.

But there is a second transformation planned for this evening's performance as well, namely one arising from the creative possibilities of interdisciplinary intermingling and the exchange between practitioners of different artforms. AAM's Music Director, Laurence Cummings, and I have discussed possible collaboration with Bill Barclay and his Concert Theatre Works since we both saw his *Secret Byrd* in 2022. I will admit to a certain surprise that of the various subjects we pitched Bill nearly two years ago he chose *The Art of Fugue*, but as he has since explained it was the one proposal without an obvious 'way in' and so the one most likely to produce something truly special. On the basis of preparations, I think you will agree that what has been wrought here is nothing short of extraordinary



and a fitting celebration of Bach's genius specifically and human empathy and ingenuity more generally.

I am grateful to Bill for his inspirational work and partnership, to our company of actors – Imogen, Peter, Simon and Steffan – for their energy and commitment, to our acclaimed musicians for their trust and skill, and to you for joining us on the adventure. You are most welcome, and I hope you enjoy the show.

We are AAM

Academy of Ancient Music is an orchestra with a worldwide reputation for excellence in baroque and classical music. Using historically informed techniques, period-specific instruments and original sources, we bring music vividly to life in committed, vibrant performances.



Established more than 50 years ago to make the first British recordings of orchestral works using original instruments, AAM has released more than 300 albums to date, collecting countless accolades including Classic BRIT, Gramophone and Edison awards. We now record on our own label AAM Records, and are proud to be the most listened-to period-instrument orchestra online, with over one million monthly listeners on streaming services.

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AAM is Associate Ensemble at the Barbican Centre, London and the Teatro San Cassiano, Venice, and Orchestra-in-Residence at the University of Cambridge and The Apex, Bury St Edmunds.



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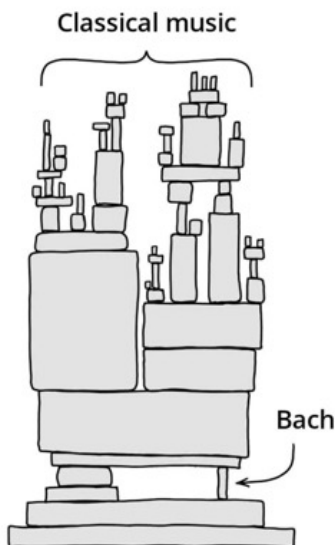
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It's All About You

Bill Barclay explains his interpretation of Bach's masterpiece



Behold, the meme.

Unattributed, whimsical, banal yet deft, it teases us about Bach's great mystery: how could one person accomplish so much?

Bach is like Shakespeare in that he invites deciphering. We know that he is one person and so are each of us, yet everything else in comparison feels as baffling as the pyramids. How on earth did he compose, rehearse and perform three whole cantata cycles during those first three years in Leipzig, for example, summoning a completely orchestrated church service for each Sunday of the year? Did he sleep?

However we may try to understand him, like Shakespeare, Bach is a Rorschach: the more we look at him the more we see ourselves. To conclude Shakespeare didn't write his own plays is to reveal much about you and little about him. To think faith wasn't enough motivation for Bach – in God, himself, in music and in us – is to doubt the power of faith inside you.

I've spent the last 15 years writing, mounting and touring works I call concert theatre – a 50/50 marriage of classical music and story. I believe this egalitarian framework evens out the class system you often find in the theatre (actors more important than musicians) and in opera (the score is more important than the story). For just a moment, concert theatre puts us all on the same stage, in the same light, to grapple together with music's awesome meaning. How do sounds make us feel such profound things? What is music doing on our planet? Why does every known human culture make it?

I recognized in this commission from AAM that in my original work I had been avoiding the German gorilla in the room. After writing some 30 pieces, chiefly for full orchestra and actors but increasingly for early music outfits, I had yet to fully confront the great master with my questions, my awe, and my limitations. What I truly thought about Bach, I was forced to admit, was a mystery to me. I'm a fan, of course – to not be would be apostasy. Bach is the greatest musical genius the world will ever know. There comes a time when we must take in his astonishing form and humbly submit to a truly vexing mystery. How was it possible? How on earth?

To make matters even more daunting, *Art of Fugue* is his final work: the pinnacle of the pinnacle. Theorists over the last 275 years have so dissected its themes and iterations that to illuminate the work itself onstage seemed both a pedantic and an unoriginal path. Or to say it differently, mystery is much more fun. So, dear reader, you may consider this work to not be about Bach at all, but about you.

I set out over a year ago to tackle two great works that had long been languishing on my shelf. John Eliot Gardiner's *Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven* may change your life. Gardiner lovingly gazes at the many tributaries that formed this rushing river of industry we know as JS Bach. Everything from the Thirty Years War to the German discovery of potatoes feels convincingly relevant, and then you have his many fine recordings to go along with it. My writing lives in the debt of his life's work.

Douglas Hofstadter's similarly sized 1979 tome, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*, was another mountain I'd long wished to climb. I must attribute it as another huge influence here, whilst not being quite as rabid about recommending it to you. The book is structured antiphonally, with a chapter about the philosophy of reiterative logic and thought ('fuguig') followed by a whimsical scene of fictional characters plucked from the mind of Lewis Carroll. Hofstadter's creativity reinforced an admittedly odd instinct for humor in my piece. If you decide to embark on his masterpiece, just know that snacking on it two chapters at a time may be a better approach.

Donald Francis Tovey's essential companion to Bach's *Art of Fugue* held my hand as I made a cumbersome musicological journey through each bar

myself. I opted for the open score in the ancient cleffs per his instruction, and followed each theme as it reincarnated into increasingly impenetrable masses of aural logic. My friends, this is a worthy journey, but not for the faint of heart. It plainly revealed my limits as a musician. Those boundaries required a new appreciation of musical perception. I do not mince words when I say that this horizon can be a spiritual experience. That experience showed me the dramatic zenith of this adaptation.

My first career as an actor helped me invent relationships onstage out of whole cloth. After all, there are no characters in Bach's work – there aren't even any instruments specified. The piece is such a practical *tabula rasa* that it somehow inspired a desire, to borrow a bit of theatre jargon, to play against type. *Art of Fugue* is seriously heady, difficult stuff. What if it's all about play? Well, of course it is.

Inescapable in a proper study of acting is status. In any group of people onstage, some are simply deemed more important by the world they inhabit. One might be a king or a millionaire, perhaps abnormally witty or attractive – so much is obvious. But the status game becomes much more engrossing in the middle of the pack. Which courtier has the prince's ear today? Who fancies herself better than her best friend? Is it a secret?

You will realise for yourself that in my play, the status of people is rather like the status of musical subjects in a fugue. It is a metaphor I try to slowly unfurl, and the pleasure of this unfolding is essentially what the play is.

In the world of comedy, where everything is exaggerated, status can become as consequential as life and death. Observe that the six Mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – six 'hard-handed men of Athens' – are locked in a meaningless pecking order among the lowest class of society, with Peter Quince and Bottom vying for the grand fromage. Hilarity ensues.

Clown work is often rewarding because it can boil dynamics down to their essence: what do you need, and how much do you need it? Everyone has a strength, however odd it may be, but more wonderfully, everyone has a weakness, which invariably invites failure. Amusingly for our species, failing is funny. Thus, every group of clowns from the Marx Brothers to the cast of *30 Rock* is invisibly distributed by their social importance. Smart

clowns are hilarious because nincompoops who fancy themselves geniuses eventually fall back to earth. Lowest status clowns are funny because somehow, idiocy is adorable and so is stepping on a rake. Middle status clowns are funny because they're generally, erm, not entirely sure... precisely where they are? Once you see relationships this way, you begin to see the pattern everywhere. Among the children of actor Brian Cox in the TV show *Succession*. In *The Three Amigos*. In the Houses of Parliament.

What I love about this work is often the person who is punched the hardest stumbles on a noble truth. The lowest-class *zanni* in the *commedia dell'arte* tradition merely wants to sleep, eat and have sex, and is there no wisdom in that? An empty brain finds presence the fastest. Don't we pathologically let our intellects get in the way?

I also believe that anyone, classical music fan or no, can face the great mystery of Bach for themselves, and in a single moment, teach us all a valuable lesson. Concert life is full of conventions that inadvertently exclude people who don't feel included. Sunlight isn't the best disinfectant – fun is – and it can relax us so we aren't encouraged to try so darn hard to be smarter.

Music isn't made for culture, for status, for fame, and it certainly isn't made for money. Music is made for you. It happens in your brain, playing on the pinball machine of your own lived experiences, and inspiring your unique curiosity. Without you, there is no music. Without your ears, Bach is an historical Thuringian organist who fathered an astonishing amount of children. You are the missing piece of the great puzzle of Bach. Or to quote Igor Stravinsky: 'There is no beauty in music itself, the beauty is within the listener'.

© Bill Barclay

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

The Art of Fugue BWV 1080 (c1742-50)

Contrapunctus I

Contrapunctus II

Contrapunctus III

Contrapunctus IV

Contrapunctus VI by Diminution, in Stylo Francese

Contrapunctus VII by Augmentation and Diminution

Contrapunctus IX alla Duodecima

Contrapunctus X alla Decima

Contrapunctus XI

Contrapunctus XII rectus and inversus

Contrapunctus XIII rectus and inversus

Fuga a tre soggetti

Chorale: Wenn wir in hoechsten Noten Sein

Please note: there is no interval in this performance

For many of JS Bach's contemporaries, the learned devices of fugue were considered a form of intellectual vanity far removed from a more desirable and 'natural' kind of music. 'Mind games' in music had come into disrepute. Yet the title of Bach's final work – *The Art of Fugue* (*Kunst der Fuge*) – makes a point of emphasising, to the contrary, that fugue is art, not artifice, *Kunst* rather than *Künstlichkeit*. It comes as no surprise then to find such a deeply moving spirit pervading this collection, for Bach's goal was not only to appeal to the mind but most particularly to the ear. Although composed so most of it could be played on the keyboard, the title *The Art of Fugue* – unlike *The Well-Tempered Clavier* or the *Clavier-Übung* – doesn't specify any instrumentation. Its aim is to explore the world of fugue rather than to care so much about who plays it. For this reason, *Art of Fugue* was printed in open score. Not only was that 'a particular advantage' in admiring 'the hidden beauties' found only in this kind of work, writes Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg in the preface to the 1752 edition, but one could see how in the fugues – each based on the same theme in D minor – 'all the voices sing continuously'.

Using an ensemble to 'sing' its parts while engaging with other voices within a constantly shifting polyphonic web was not an entirely new concept; the same idea had occurred to the French composer François Roberday almost a century

before when he published his *Fugues, et caprices à quatre parties* (1660). Like *The Art of Fugue*, the work was printed in open score, a format, the composer writes, that allows a rendition 'on viols or other similar instruments, [so that] each player has his part detached from the others'. This unravelling of the counterpoint exposes the dynamic interactions among the parts and highlights the kind of elevated conversation so familiar from the consort repertoire. And the characters who converse in *The Art of Fugue* are nothing short of extraordinary! Bach manages to paint a finely delineated set of contrasting musical portraits brimming with revelations and surprises, for nothing in this work appears as expected. Indeed, by restricting himself to a solitary theme, Bach forces himself to seek out ever novel styles and combinations that evoke a panoply of unusual yet intelligible feelings. Far from an academic encyclopaedia of arcane musical techniques, *The Art of Fugue* embarks on a voyage of discovery shared by an inveterate explorer whose thirst for invention knows no bounds.

The core of the work – the first eleven fugues (not all heard today) – progresses through the three classic types of fugues: simple fugues (Contrapunctus I to IV) which avoid invertible counterpoint, counterfugues (Contrapunctus V to VII) which feature melodic inversion and thematic augmentation, and double fugues (Contrapunctus VIII to XI) involve highlighted countersubjects and invertible counterpoint.

The two mirror fugues, Contrapunctus XII and XIII, attempt something more unusual. Beginning with the usual staggered entries of voices, they are designed so that each piece is also heard 'upside down' (*rectus* and *inversus*) following a strict procedure of melodic inversion: whatever goes up in one version goes down in its mirrored alter ego. Initially Bach composed Contrapunctus XIII for three voices but probably wasn't entirely happy with the musical result. I say this because he went out of his way to add a fourth free voice in a remarkable adaptation he arranged 'for two harpsichords' that masks certain infelicities in the original works, both *rectus* and *inversus* (tonight strings perform *rectus* with winds responding on *inversus*). It's these later versions that makes Bach's achievement in crafting compelling pieces of music especially jaw-dropping.

The incomplete double fugue based on three themes, the *Fuga a tre soggetti* (heard this evening on solo harpsichord), embraces not only the audacious inclusion of Bach's monogram – the notes B flat-A-C-B natural in German notation spells B-A-C-H – but also borrows elements of melodic inversion (or counterfugue) and *stretto* (or canon). Despite its fragmentary torso, the *Fuga a tre soggetti* was intended as the first of two final digests summing up of the entire collection. Opening with

a compression – *The Art of Fugue* subject that forms a melodic palindrome – this piece offers a more personal vision of fugue, for Bach makes an unmissable cameo appearance as one of the countersubjects.

All of Bach's heirs were certain that his worsening eye condition prevented him from completing the *Fuga a tre soggetti* (as well as a final invertible fugue on four themes). And, though some scholars have supposed that Bach had completed the final fugue before he died, it's difficult to explain why he never supplied a conclusion to the engraver. He certainly had enough time to do so: following a study of Bach's deteriorating handwriting, it turns out that he had at least five months before his first eye operation and possibly far more than that during which time he failed to send the completed piece to the engraver.

So why didn't Bach finish *The Art of Fugue*? Many explanations are possible, but I suspect the composer had second thoughts about sending a work that proclaimed – with entirely a rather atypical vanity – his boldly embroidered family emblem, no matter how well-deserved this proclamation. That is, even if he could easily have worked out the remainder of the final fugue whose three themes he had already combined with one another, Bach chose through his inaction to leave it unfinished at his death. Perhaps he was alarmed at a published display of personal pride, a mortal sin, after all. To flaunt his own name as an explicit theme in *The Art of Fugue* was a rather different matter from merely recounting to friends, as we know he did, how the Bach family could boast of their devotion to music because their name formed a melody. More likely, Bach realised that the prominent appearance of B-A-C-H was no mere trifle or witticism, but rather reflected an unacceptably immodest pronouncement that may have compromised how he wished his legacy to be seen.

Certainly Carl Philip Emanuel Bach believed that the fragmentary state of the *Fuga a tre soggetti* related to death and mortality when he inscribed a curious addendum on the last page of the unfinished manuscript: 'NB. At this point in the fugue where the name B A C H was introduced in a countersubject, the author died.' Now Emanuel had been in Berlin (rather than in Leipzig) during the time before his father's death and may simply have jumped to a not unreasonable conclusion or even engaged in a bit of attractive mythmaking. But whatever his motive, Emanuel's inscription contains a undeniable kernel of truth: as a composer of fugues, JS Bach had in fact expired at that very moment when the last tenor notes of his manuscript fade into silence. Yet, even without the satisfaction of an ending, we, the lucky inheritors of such a dazzling magnum opus, can still marvel at its stirring tribute to fugue and its 'hidden beauties' while lamenting the loss of someone so passionately dedicated to its cultivation.

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Maria Theresia Ahlefeldt *Telemachus on Calypso's Isle*
Haydn *Trumpet Concerto*
Beethoven *Symphony No. 5*

David Blackadder *trumpet*
Academy of Ancient Music
Laurence Cummings *conductor*



Friday 27 June 2025 | 7.30pm
Barbican Hall, London

Tickets: from £18 (booking fees apply)

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Laurence Cummings

director & harpsichord



Laurence Cummings is one of Britain's most exciting and versatile exponents of historical performance both as a conductor and a harpsichord player. He is Music Director of Orquestra Barroca Casa da Música in Porto as well as AAM's current Music Director, and celebrated his 25th and final year as Musical Director of the London Handel Festival last year.

Frequently praised for his stylish performances in the opera house, he has conducted productions across Europe at houses including Opernhaus Zürich, Theater an der Wien, Chatelet Paris and

Gothenburg Opera. In the UK he has been a regular guest at English National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Garsington Opera and Opera North. He made his main stage debut at Royal Opera House conducting Handel's *Jephtha* last season.

Equally at home on the concert platform, he is regularly invited to conduct both period and modern orchestras worldwide, including the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, The English Concert, Handel and Haydn Society Boston, Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Moscow Chamber Orchestra, Jerusalem Symphony, and in the UK with Hallé Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

His recordings include discs with Emma Kirkby and Royal Academy of Music on BIS, Angelika Kirschlager and the Basel Chamber Orchestra for Sony BMG, Maurice Steger and The English Concert for Harmonia Mundi, as well as a series of live performances for Accent recorded at the Göttingen International Handel Festival where he was Artistic Director from 2011-21. He has also released numerous solo harpsichord recital and chamber music recordings for Naxos.

Until 2012 he was Head of Historical Performance at the Royal Academy of Music and is now the William Crotch Professor of Historical Performance.

Laurence was awarded an OBE for services to Music in the New Year Honours List 2024.

Bill Barclay

writer & director



Director, writer and composer Bill Barclay has created dozens of theatrical concerts with the world's most prominent ensembles. He is Artistic Director of Concert Theatre Works and Music Before 1800 and was Director of Music at Shakespeare's Globe from 2012-19.

He has produced for world-class venues in the US and UK including the Hollywood Bowl, The Kennedy Center, Royal Albert Hall, Buckingham Palace and on Broadway. West End credits include *Farinelli and the King*, *Twelfth Night* and *Richard III*, all starring Sir Mark Rylance.

Major tours include *The Chevalier*, *Secret Byrd* for The Gesualdo Six and Fretwork (20 cities on tour) and *Anthony and Cleopatra* (LA Philharmonic, BBC Symphony Orchestra and others). Barclay has been commissioned five times by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, appearing across eight seasons.

As a composer, Barclay composed the historic Hamlet Globe-to-Globe which toured to 189 countries, and *Call of the Wild*, performed in 42 US states. His newest work *Letters to a Young Poet* lately premiered with the Brodsky Quartet at the Aldeburgh Festival and tours this year.

A noted curator, he created the Candlelit Concerts series from the launch of London's Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in 2014, partnering with the Royal Opera House and BBC Proms. He founded the label Globe Music, recognised by the Royal Philharmonic Society, for Shakespeare's Globe where he produced music for 130 productions and 150 concerts over seven years.

A lauded actor, Barclay received a Fox Foundation Fellowship, the largest grant for actors in the US. He is a Boston native and past acting company member at Shakespeare & Company (11 years), the Actors Shakespeare Project (10 years, Artistic Associate) and the Mercury Theatre (UK).

Peter Bray

actor



Peter Bray is a Leamington Spa-based actor who trained at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. His stage work includes *Manor* and *Emil and the Detectives* at the National Theatre; *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Shakespeare's Globe, and *The White Devil*, *Arden of Faversham* and *The Heart of Robin Hood* with the RSC. Other credits include *Measure for Measure* (Rose Theatre, Kingston); *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Watermill Theatre); *In Basildon* (Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch); *The Iliad*

(Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh); *The Duchess of Malfi* (Nottingham Playhouse); *Britten: The Canticles* (Linbury Studio and Theatre Royal Brighton); *De Gabay* (National Theatre of Wales); *Blowing and Moshing Lying Down* (FanSHEN Theatre Company); *Stories Project 2* (Southwark Playhouse); *After Violence* (Raynes Park Festival); *Shooting Rats* (Oval House Theatre); and *The Boy from Centreville* (Pleasance Edinburgh Festival).

On screen, Peter has appeared in *Casualty* (BBC) and *Love and Death* (Ratchet Films).

Steffan Cennydd

actor



Steffan trained at Guildhall School of Music & Drama winning the Gold Medal for Acting. In 2024 he received glowing reviews for his performance in Taylor Mac's play *Hir* at the Park Theatre, directed by Steven Kunis, in which he starred opposite Felicity Huffman. The same year he performed in Stella Feehily's play *The Lightest Element* at the Hampstead Theatre directed by Alice Hamilton.

Steffan has recently starred in the BBC Wales series *Tree on a Hill* and appeared in the Apple TV series *Criminal Record* alongside Cush Jumbo and Peter Capaldi. Steffan won a breakthrough nomination at the 2019 British Academy Cymru Awards for his role in the TV series *Enid a Lucy*. Other recent credits include the BBC series *Hidden*, ITV's *The Pembrokeshire Murders* and a BFI feature called *Sweetheart* directed by Marley Morrison.

Imogen Frances

actor



Imogen (they/she) is a Manchester-born, Devon-bred and London-based actor, director, intimacy director and writer. They are most passionate about working on female-centered and queer stories. As a director, their production of Paul Bradshaw's *tell me straight* won The Standing Ovation Award, 2022. As an intimacy director they are currently on *The Accelerator Program* with IDC Professionals and mostly recently worked on *Outlying Islands* (Jermyn Street Theatre) and *Bellringers* (Hampstead Theatre).

As a writer, she's currently one of 21 playwrights on The Northcott Theatre's Elevate Writers Scheme. In 2024 their play *WOM(b)AN* was selected for a day of development at the Young Vic and to be a part of RECLAIM Festival. Imogen's debut play ; (*pause before continuing*) made the long-list for the RSC's 37 Plays Award in 2023. As an actor, she is thrilled to be a part of Bill Barclay's *Bach's Art of Fugue*. During the summer they will be performing the roles of Lady Capulet and Benvolio in Martin Berry's production of *Romeo & Juliet* at the Northcott Theatre.

Simon Slater

actor



Simon is an Olivier-nominated actor and composer. He has composed original music for over 400 theatre, film, television and radio productions, including scores for the award-winning *Constellations* (West End, Royal Court New York, also nominated for an Olivier); *Private Lives* (Donmar); *Ghosts* (Lyric Hammersmith) and *Amadeus* at the National Theatre. TV and film includes scores for *Holby City*, *Dalziel and Pasco*, *Crimes of Christine Keeler* and *Traitors*, and recent scores heard on BBC Radio 3 and 4 include *Black Water*, *A Ghastly Mistake* and *Silos*.

As a performer, Simon's many theatre performances include *Mamma Mia* and *Chariots of Fire* in the West End, and he has performed his one man show *Bloodshot* all over the world including London, Chicago, Calgary and Vienna. He is a regular face on TV with appearances including in *Holby City*, *Spooks*, *Mr Selfridge*, *Monarch of the Glen* and *The Iron Lady*. He is the voice of many audio books, winning awards for his narration of *Wolf Hall*.

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2024-25

We love to hear your feedback. Here's what you said about our last concert, Bach's *St John Passion*, in April.

All the skilled artists worked together to produce a hearer's response worthy of the subject, the music and your performance. The only discord came for me in the programme note at the end of first paragraph: 'listeners would have endured a gruelling sermon'. 'Gruelling' just didn't sound right. Could I suggest instead ... 'heard a sermon to help them understand the narrative and its deeper meaning.'

One thing that made me come was the timing of the concert. I am disabled and can't really do things in the evening so having an afternoon concert was a real opportunity. The concert itself was exceptional. The soloists and in fact all performers brought real emotion and nuance to the music. I loved it.

The question on the reasons for attending is unhelpful because I had no opinion on the ensemble, soloists or conductor. We thought it would be nice to see the *St John Passion* on Good Friday and that if the orchestra was playing the Barbican it would be up to scratch. Which it was.

The orchestra was superb, especially the viol de gamba player, the two viols d'amor and the wind section. Soloists and choir were excellent too. The surtitles were extremely helpful.

I and my children are really enjoyed the concert: magical music, amazing orchestra, soloists, choir, authentic instruments, the atmosphere! I have listened to this music many times with different performers, but for the first time I could literally understand each word, because of the live surtitles! Thank you!

Keep an eye out for our post-concert survey email, and tell us what you think about this evening's concert.

Violin I

Bojan Čičić

Violin II

Julia Kuhn

Viola

Jane Rogers

Cello

Sarah McMahon

Oboe

Joel Raymond

Oboe da Caccia

Gail Hennessy

Taille

Sarah Humphreys

Bassoon

Ursula Leveaux

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