

Welcome to the opening concert of the Academy's new series at St Martin-in-the-Fields. We are delighted to be sharing new live performances with you online every month until August. Next month, we'll be presenting a concert of baroque and baroque-inspired music with guest director John Butt. Find out more about this and the other concerts in the series at asmf.org

J.S Bach Brandenburg Concerto, No. 6 in B flat major, BWV. 1051
James MacMillan Untold
Brahms Serenade No. 2 in A major, Op. 16

With 'no violins' as the starting point for this concert, **J.S Bach's** sixth Brandenburg Concerto is the perfect companion to the pieces by MacMillan and Brahms that follow. Like the Third "Brandenburg Concerto", the Sixth and last is a piece of string chamber music which can be performed only with one player to each part; but unlike the Third, it does preserve, at least in outline, the instrumental layout of a concerto. The principal solo instruments are two violas; a cello sometimes adds a third solo part, and sometimes joins forces with the continuo section of violone (or double bass) and harpsichord; and there is a kind of miniature ripieno - or accompaniment - section consisting of two viole da gamba. These two parts - performed on the cello in this concert - are, conspicuously, not very difficult, as one of the parts was originally written to be played by an amateur. In the first movement the gambas sometimes join the bass instruments in repeated quavers, supporting the intricate interweaving of the two violas, and sometimes play a modest part in more general contrapuntal exchanges. In the central slow movement, they are silent, leaving what is effectively the texture of a trio sonata, with the two violas above and the cello providing a decorated version of the bass line below. And, though the gambas return in the gigue-time finale, they once more play a background role while the two violas, and occasionally the cello, keep up the exhilarating momentum. From notes by Anthony Burton

Untold by **James MacMillan** is written for a wind quintet which uses cor anglais rather than oboe, reflecting the mellow hues of the violin free Brahms Serenade. The composer writes: "Untold was commissioned by the Ayr Arts Guild for the Flaxton Ensemble who gave the premiere in 1987. It is a short, slow movement for wind quintet but using a cor anglais instead of an oboe. Its mood is lyrical and expressive, the material being loosely based on an Irish love-song: For Ireland I'll not tell her Name."

Written, as it is, for an ensemble without violins, **Johannes Brahms'** Serenade No.2 is rarely performed but has long been on our programming wish-list. His two early orchestral serenades are often viewed as his essays in writing for symphony orchestra before launching himself into the symphonic world. The composer said that 'After Haydn, writing a symphony was no longer a joke but a matter of life and death' however they are also a late flowering in the long tradition of Serenades and Divertimenti exemplified by Mozart and built on by Beethoven and Schubert. Personally I don't think they are practice 'symphonies' at all! Stephen Stirling, Principal Horn

Viola

Robert Smissen
Ian Rathbone
Nicholas Barr
Alexandros Koustas

Cello

Richard Lester
Will Schofield
Juliet Welchman
Reinoud Ford

Bass

Lynda Houghton
Christopher West

Flute

Harry Winstanley
Sarah Newbold

Piccolo

Rebecca Larsen

Oboe

Timothy Rundle

Oboe/Cor Anglais

Rachel Ingleton

Clarinet

James Burke
Thomas Lessels

Bassoon

Julie Price
Graham Hobbs

Horn

Stephen Stirling
Joanna Hensel

Harpsichord

John Constable

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