

# RHAPSODY IN BLUE WITH JEREMY DENK

**JEREMY DENK** *piano*

**JACQUELINE SHAVE** *leader/director*

**THOMAS HANCOX** *flute*

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<b>BYRD/DUFAY/BACH/MOZART/MONTEVERDI</b> <i>Suite</i>	14 mins
<b>STRAVINSKY</b> <i>Concerto for piano and winds</i>	20 mins
INTERVAL	20 mins
<i>A selection of piano solos</i>	10 mins
<b>MILHAUD</b> <i>La création du monde</i>	16 mins
<b>GERSHWIN</b> <i>Rhapsody in Blue (original jazz band version)</i>	17 mins

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**BBC**  
RADIO



90 – 93FM

## **LONDON MILTON COURT CONCERT HALL**

Tuesday 27 February 2018 – 7.30pm

*Broadcast live on BBC Radio 3*

## **NORWICH ST ANDREW'S HALL**

Friday 2 March 2018 – 7.30pm

### **PRE-CONCERT TALK – 6.30PM**

**Jeremy Denk** discusses tonight's programme.

## **BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX**

Monday 5 March 2018 – 7.30pm

If you have a mobile phone, please ensure that it is turned off during the performance.

In accordance with the requirements of the licensing authority, persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways.

No camera, tape recorder, other types of recording apparatus, food or drink may be brought into the auditorium. It is illegal to record any performance unless prior arrangements have been made with Britten Sinfonia.

Large print versions of our programmes are available upon prior request by calling 01223 300795.

# WELCOME

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Photo © Elizabeth Hunt



We're thrilled to be working again with pianist Jeremy Denk, who is such a natural and inspiring collaborator and programmer, and also Artist-in-Residence at Milton Court this season. Some audiences may remember our last project with him exploring a mix of baroque music and 20th-century re-imaginings of ragtime and tango.

Our latest collaboration is no less adventurous: Jeremy was keen to pair Stravinsky's jazzy-neoclassical *Concerto for piano and winds* with Gershwin's iconic *Rhapsody in Blue*, the latter with its original 24-piece band, reflecting its debt to the jazz halls and Broadway. Curiously (or not) both these seminal pieces were premiered in 1924, and months earlier, in October 1923, the premiere took place of the other major work in this concert: Darius Milhaud's *La création du monde*. Like Stravinsky, Milhaud travelled to

New York in the early 1920s and his jazz-infused ballet score reflects the music he heard in some of the Harlem dance halls. If that were not enough, Jeremy will perform a selection of piano solos, and a continuous suite of rhythmically intricate works from Bach, Mozart, Byrd, Dufay and Monteverdi.

Finally, we're delighted that our broadcast partners, BBC Radio 3, will be broadcasting this concert live from Milton Court and to be presenting it in our Norwich series and returning to the wonderful Apex in Bury St Edmunds.

Enjoy the concert!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Butcher".

**David Butcher**  
Chief Executive & Artistic Director

## AT LUNCH THREE

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**CAMBRIDGE WEST ROAD  
CONCERT HALL**

**Tuesday 17 April 2018, 1pm\***

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**LONDON WIGMORE HALL**

**Wednesday 18 April 2018, 1pm\*\***

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**NORWICH ST ANDREW'S HALL**

**Friday 20 April 2018, 1pm**

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**THOMAS GOULD** *violin*

**CLARE FINNIMORE** *viola*

**CAROLINE DEARNLEY** *cello*

**TOM POSTER** *piano*

\*POST-CONCERT TALK, 2.15PM (CAMBRIDGE)

\*\*PRE-CONCERT TALK, 12.15PM (LONDON)

Caroline Shaw discusses her new work.

The logo for Britten Sinfonia, featuring a stylized musical note symbol to the left of the text "Britten Sinfonia". "Britten" is in a smaller font above "Sinfonia", which is in a larger, bold font.

# Britten Sinfonia

CAROLINE SHAW

*New work (world premiere tour)*

BRAHMS

*Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor*

Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer Caroline Shaw's new work is premiered in the third At Lunch concert of the season.

[www.brittensinfonia.com](http://www.brittensinfonia.com)

## BYRD/DUFAY/BACH/MOZART/MONTEVERDI

Suite

### WILLIAM BYRD (c.1543–1623)

*Haec Dies* (1591)

For orchestra, strings and winds

### GUILLAUME DUFAY (c.1397–1474)

Chanson for three voices

For three winds and brass

### JS BACH (1685–1750)

*Presto* from Flute Sonata in B minor, BWV 1030 (1736–37)

For flute and piano

### WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

*Gigue* in G major, K. 574 (1789)


For solo piano

### CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI (1567–1643)

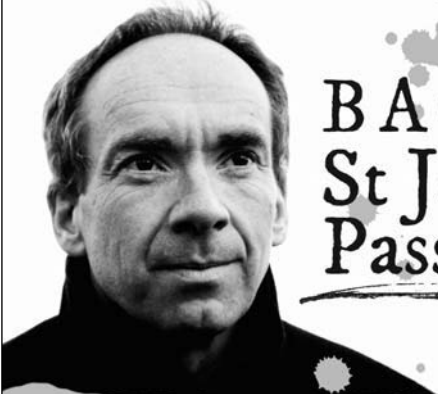
*Zefiro Torna e il bel tempo rimena*

from Madrigals, Book 6 (1614)

For strings, winds and brass



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ANCIENT MUSIC



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James Gilchrist Evangelist	Philippe Sly Christus	Lydia Teuscher soprano	Iestyn Davies countertenor
Ilker Arcayurek tenor	Cody Quattlebaum bass	Choir of AAM	

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Image: Jeremy Denk © Michael Wilson

**Sat 3 Mar**  
**Jeremy Denk  
in Recital**

Jeremy closes his Milton Court residency  
with Prokofiev's *Visions Fugitives* and  
Schumann's *Fantasy in C minor*.

**barbican**

## IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)

*Concerto for piano and wind instruments* (1924)

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*I: Largo – Allegro – Maestoso*

*II: Larghissimo*

*III: Allegro – Agitato – Lento – Stringendo*

Stravinsky once described himself as a musical ‘kleptomaniac’ who could not help ‘stealing’ the different sounds and colours of other musical traditions. And it was this magpie-like approach to composition that saw his style change so dramatically over the course of his career, from his early Russian period, through neoclassicism to the avant-garde experimentation of his final years. But throughout these twists and turns, his love for the piano remained steadfast: there is music for the piano to be found in every epoch of his multifarious career. The piano was his first instrument and even while his career as a composer began to take flight, Stravinsky continued to tour as a concert pianist, often performing his own – fearsomely difficult – music. Like Rachmaninov, Stravinsky had unusually large hands, and much of his writing for piano tests even the most adept of soloists with its dramatic leaps and tortuous stretches.

In 1923, Stravinsky was approached by Serge Koussevitsky, one of the most prominent conductors of his generation and a huge champion of new music, with a request for a new piano concerto to be performed during his Paris concert series. Stravinsky, who had yet to compose anything for piano with orchestra, was already sure that this new work would not follow a traditional orchestral format. ‘*Strings and piano, a sound scraped and a sound struck, do not sound well together*’, he declared. ‘*Piano and wind, sounds struck and blown, do.*’

The finished concerto for piano and winds was premiered the following year, with Stravinsky at the keyboard. And while the critical reception was positive, the concert itself was nearly a disaster. ‘*After finishing the first movement and just before beginning the Largo which opens with a passage for solo piano*’, he later admitted, ‘*I suddenly realised that I had completely forgotten how it started. I said so quietly to Koussevitzky, who glanced at the score and hummed the first notes. That was enough to restore my balance and enable me to attack the Largo.*’ One of the first works to launch Stravinsky’s newly developed ‘neoclassical’ style (though he hated the term), the concerto is based on a traditional three-movement classical model, opening here with an extended French overture. Its funereal dotted rhythms form a sombre preface to the spirited Allegro that follows: this is not a movement of sparkling faux-Mozartean lightness, but



*Igor Stravinsky*

instead a more hard-edged, cacophonous reinterpretation of a Bach invention, its thematicism percussive, insistent and unrelenting. The central slow movement, by contrast, presents Stravinsky’s softer side, the serenity of its cantabile writing at times evoking the late Romantic concertos of his fellow Russians, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov. But any stillness is short-lived and the finale returns us to the neo-Baroque, with toccata-like figuration reimaged here for the twentieth century, tiny wisps of jazz floating through an otherwise mesmerising patchwork of textures and ideas.

Programme notes by Jo Kirkbride

Programme designed and typeset by  
Hugh Hillyard-Parker, Edinburgh

## DARIUS MILHAUD (1892-1974)

*La création du monde* (1923)

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One of the most prolific composers of the twentieth century, with a catalogue to rival even that of Mozart, Milhaud wrote music for almost every conceivable form and instrumentation, numbering nearly 500 individual pieces. Among his vast oeuvre, there are nine operas, 12 ballets, 12 symphonies, six piano concertos and 18 string quartets, not to mention numerous film scores, choral works and a wealth of music for solo piano. Like Stravinsky, who was a close contemporary, Milhaud was strongly influenced by music outside the classical mainstream and drew much of his inspiration from the burgeoning jazz scene developing in America during the early part of the twentieth century.

Milhaud first became interested in jazz in 1920 when he attended a concert in London given by an American jazz band. Two years later, he travelled to America and for the first time heard 'authentic' jazz music being performed on the streets of Harlem. It was a transformative experience, as Milhaud later recalled: *'The music was absolutely different from anything I had ever heard before, and was a revelation to me. Against the beat of the drums the melodic lines criss-crossed in a breathless pattern of broken and twisted rhythms.'* The following year, he sat down to compose 'a work making wholesale use of the jazz style to convey a purely classical feeling'. The resulting 20-minute ballet, *La création du monde*, mimics both the instrumental line-ups he heard in the Harlem dance halls and the sultry blues harmonies of jazz ballads. But rather than simply creating a pastiche of American jazz, Milhaud splices these ideas with traditional classical forms to create a wholly new genre – something that approximates to 'classical jazz'. With the simple addition of a saxophone, Milhaud brings a Baroque prelude and fugue firmly into the twentieth century, while his characteristically creative use of percussion transforms the classical orchestra into a Dixieland ensemble.

As the title suggests, the ballet – which runs in six continuous movements – depicts the creation of the Earth according to an African creation myth penned by the Swiss poet and novelist Blaise Cendrars. As the work opens, three African deities begin to conjure life into being through a series of rituals and spells, creating a flurry of activity that eventually results in the creation of humankind. After a heated dance of desire, performed by Man and Woman, life on the Earth is assured and the work closes with a hushed sense of serenity and fulfilment. While this rather radical musical take on the



*Darius Milhaud*

story of creation was not to everyone's tastes at its premiere, it was not long before Milhaud became celebrated for his forward-thinking style. *'The critics decreed that my music was frivolous', he said, 'and more suitable for a restaurant or a dance hall than for the concert hall. Ten years later, those self-same critics were discussing the philosophy of jazz and learnedly demonstrated that La création was with the best of my works.'*

## GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898–1937)

*Rhapsody in Blue* (1924)

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When Gershwin approached Arnold Schoenberg with a request for lessons in composition, he was met with an abrupt response: *'I would only make you a bad Schoenberg, and you're such a good Gershwin already.'* Though Gershwin took huge interest in the works of the avant garde, his heart lay in the jazz and blues of his native America. By the age of 21, he was already earning himself a reputation as one of the foremost composers of popular song, with a clutch of Broadway musicals and a string of hit songs to his name. He may not have realised it at the time, but he did not need Schoenberg's influence – his music was already carving out a new niche, one that bridged the boundaries between the jazz club and the concert hall.

Gershwin aired much of his early cabaret music during the early 1920s at George White's 'Scandals' – a long-running series of renowned revue shows on Broadway – and in 1923 he was approached by its bandleader, Paul Whiteman, with an idea for a new 'jazz concerto' to be performed at an all-jazz concert in New York's Aeolian Hall. Busy with other projects, Gershwin thought little more of the proposal but in early January the following year he stumbled upon a newspaper article about Whiteman's concert, set to take place a month later, claiming that *'George Gershwin is at work on a jazz concerto, Irving Berlin is writing a syncopated tone poem, and Victor Herbert is working on an American suite.'* With little time to waste, Gershwin spent a train journey to Boston sketching out some ideas and his *American Rhapsody* (as it was then called), was completed a few weeks later. *'It was on the train'*, he later recalled, *'with its steely rhythms, its rattle-ty bang, that is so often so stimulating to a composer – I frequently hear music in the very heart of the noise... And there I suddenly heard, and even saw on paper – the complete construction of the Rhapsody, from beginning to end... I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America, of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our metropolitan madness. By the time I reached Boston I had a definite plot of the piece, as distinguished from its actual substance.'*

Now best-known in its more elaborate scoring for piano and full symphony orchestra, Gershwin's *Rhapsody* was originally conceived as the much smaller version for Whiteman's 24-piece jazz band that we hear today. In its original form, the *Rhapsody* may lack the bombast and drama of the full orchestra, but it also allows us to hear more keenly the work's origins in the jazz halls and nightclubs of New York – in this version, it is less a



George Gershwin

synthesis of jazz and classical and more obviously a tribute to Broadway. It also owes much to the influence of others, its conception a 'vast melting pot' in all manner of ways. Gershwin had his brother Ira to thank for the inclusion of the brooding central theme – a fragment he had already composed but not yet found a home for – and it was also Ira who suggested retitling the work as *Rhapsody in Blue* after he attended an art exhibition by the painter James McNeill Whistler. Even the iconic opening clarinet glissando – itself such a distinctive part of the piece – was a humorous addition from the clarinetist at the first rehearsal, that Gershwin liked enough to add to the score. As it was, the final score only came together properly after the first performance, where Gershwin improvised much of the piano part, only allowing himself to commit it to paper after the concert. The premiere was not unanimously received – the public adored this 'new voice' in American music, while many of the critics decried its 'formlessness' – but the *Rhapsody* has since established itself as a twentieth century landmark. Gershwin had hoped to emulate its success with his *Second Rhapsody* of 1931, composed initially for the Hollywood film *Delicious*, but this follow-up still remains virtually unknown, its more hard-edged, modernistic soundworld no match for the glorious, singable melodies of his *Rhapsody in Blue*.

# ON STAGE TONIGHT

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## **VIOLIN 1**

Jacqueline Shave  
Ruth Ehrlich  
Martin Gwilym-Jones  
Deborah Preece

## **VIOLIN 2**

Miranda Dale  
Nicola Goldscheider  
Alexandra Caldon  
Judith Kelly

## **CELLO**

Ben Chappell

## **DOUBLE BASSES**

Chris West  
Elena Hull  
Laurence Ungless

## **FLUTES**

Thomas Hancox  
Sarah O'Flynn

## **PICCOLOS**

Thomas Hancox  
David Cuthbert

## **OBOES**

Gordon Hunt  
Emma Feilding\*  
Alison Alty

\* *Milhaud*

## **COR ANGLAIS**

Emma Feilding

## **CLARINETS**

Joy Farrall  
Emma Canavan

## **E FLAT CLARINET**

Joy Farrall

## **BASS CLARINET**

Guy Passey

## **SOPRANO SAXOPHONES**

Christian Forshaw  
Simon Haram

## **ALTO SAXOPHONES**

Christian Forshaw  
Guy Passey

## **TENOR SAXOPHONE**

Simon Haram

## **BARITONE SAXOPHONE**

Christian Forshaw

## **BASSOONS**

Lawrence O'Donnell  
Stuart Russell

## **CONTRABASSOON**

Stuart Russell

## **HORNS**

Francisco Gomez  
Kira Doherty  
Matthew Gunner  
Jonathan Bareham

## **TRUMPETS**

Paul Archibald  
Shane Brennan  
Bruce Nockles  
Jo Harris

## **TROMBONES**

Michael Buchanan  
Becky Smith

## **BASS TROMBONE**

Paul Lambert

## **TUBA**

Edd Leech

## **TIMPANI**

Matthew Turner

## **PERCUSSION**

George Barton  
Matthew Turner

## **KIT**

Matthew French

## **PIANO**

Clodna Shanahan

## **BANJO**

Daniel Thomas

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# JEREMY DENK

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Jeremy Denk is one of America's foremost pianists. Winner of a MacArthur 'Genius' Fellowship and the Avery Fisher Prize, Denk was also recently elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Denk returns frequently to Carnegie Hall and has recently performed with the Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Cleveland Orchestra, as well as on tour with Academy of St Martin in the Fields.

Last season he undertook a recital tour of the UK, including a return to the Wigmore Hall. He also returned to the BBC Proms playing Bartók's Second Piano Concerto, and in past seasons has performed with the London Symphony Orchestra, and Britten Sinfonia, with whom he is also performing again this season. Denk also recently made his debuts at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Philharmonie in Cologne, and Klavier-Festival Ruhr, and continues to appear extensively on tour in recital throughout the US, including, recently, in Chicago, Washington, Boston, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and at New York's Lincoln Center's White Light Festival in a special program that included a journey through seven centuries of Western music.

This season, Denk returns to the San Francisco Symphony with Tilson Thomas, and Carnegie Hall with Orchestra St Luke's, and continues as Artistic Partner of The St Paul Chamber Orchestra with multiple performances throughout the season, and a new piano concerto written for him by Hannah Lash. He also appears in recital throughout the US, including performances in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Houston, Seattle, and Los Angeles. He also makes his debut on tour in Asia, including recitals in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Seoul. Future projects include re-uniting with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, and a US tour with his longtime musical partners Joshua Bell and Steven Isserlis.

Denk is known for his original and insightful writing on music which Alex Ross praises for its 'arresting sensitivity and wit'. His writing has appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *New Republic*, *The Guardian*, and on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review*. He is the composer of an opera presented by Carnegie Hall, and is working on a book which will be published by Macmillan UK and Random House US.



Photo © Michael Wilson

Denk's debut with Nonesuch Records paired Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 111 with Ligeti's *Études*; his account of the Beethoven sonata was selected by BBC Radio 3's *Building a Library* as the best available version recorded on modern piano. His latest recording of the *Goldberg Variations* reached No. 1 in the Billboard Classical Charts.

Jeremy Denk graduated from Oberlin College, Indiana University, and the Juilliard School. He lives in New York City, and his website and blog are at [jeremydenk.net](http://jeremydenk.net).

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## E-NEWSLETTER

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Britten Sinfonia celebrates its 25th birthday this season. In just 25 years of existence, we have given more than 1,500 concerts, been heard by over half a million people in 25 countries and commissioned over 300 new works. We have also made 36 recordings and worked with 125,000 participants through our Creative Learning programme.

To ensure we can continue making trailblazing music we are asking music lovers to give a £25 birthday donation to the orchestra. Britten Sinfonia gratefully acknowledges the support of the following donors to the £25 for 25 years campaign:

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Visit [brittensinfonia.com](http://brittensinfonia.com) for details of how to donate to the £25 for 25 years campaign and your name will feature in all our programmes for the rest of the season.

# BRITTEN SINFONIA

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Now in its 25th anniversary season, Britten Sinfonia is one of the world's most celebrated and pioneering ensembles. The orchestra is acclaimed for its virtuoso musicianship, an inspired approach to concert programming which makes bold, intelligent connections across 400 years of repertoire, and a versatility that is second to none. Britten Sinfonia breaks the mould by not having a principal conductor or director, instead choosing to collaborate with a range of the finest international guest artists from across the musical spectrum, resulting in performances of rare insight and energy.

Britten Sinfonia is an Associate Ensemble at the Barbican in London, has residencies across the east of England in Norwich, Cambridge (where it is an Ensemble-in-Residence at the University) and Saffron Walden, where the orchestra became Resident Orchestra at Saffron Hall in Autumn 2016. The orchestra also performs a chamber music series at Wigmore Hall and appears regularly at major UK festivals including the Aldeburgh Festival and BBC Proms. The orchestra's growing international profile includes regular touring to North and South America and Europe. The orchestra made its debut in China in May 2016 with a three-concert residency in Shanghai, as well as performances in Beijing and Wuhan.

Founded in 1992, the orchestra is inspired by the ethos of Benjamin Britten through world-class performances, illuminating and distinctive programmes where old meets new, and a deep commitment to bringing outstanding music to both the world's finest concert halls and the local community. Britten Sinfonia is a BBC Radio 3 broadcast partner and regularly records for Harmonia Mundi and Hyperion.

In 2017–18, Britten Sinfonia collaborates with artists including Thomas Adès, Sir Mark Elder, Jeremy Denk, Cambridge's King's College Choir, Elizabeth Kulman, Nicolas Hodges and Ailish Tynan, with premieres from composers including Mark-Anthony Turnage, Emma-Ruth Richards, Leo Chadburn and Nik Bärtsch. Following UK performances, many of these collaborations will tour internationally with performances in some of the world's finest concert halls. In 2018 the orchestra will perform for the second time at the Philharmonie in Paris, and will make its debut at The Sistine Chapel, Vatican City.

Central to Britten Sinfonia's artistic programmes is a wide range of creative learning projects within both schools and the community including the talented youth ensemble Britten Sinfonia Academy and annual composition competition, OPUS2017, offering unpublished composers the chance to receive a professional commission.

In 2013 Britten Sinfonia was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award for Ensemble having previously won the Chamber Music Award in 2009 and the Ensemble Award in 2007. Britten Sinfonia recordings have been Grammy nominated, received a *Gramophone Award* and two ECHO/Klassik Recording Awards, and most recently were awarded a *BBC Music Magazine Award* for its recording of James MacMillan's *Oboe Concerto*. In 2014 Britten Sinfonia was nominated for an Olivier Award for its collaboration with the Richard Alston Dance Company.

“ Britten Sinfonia play with sinuous beauty and virtuosic clarity. ” **The Times 2015**



Photo © Alex Beer

# BRITTEN SINFONIA

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## FIRST VIOLINS

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*Supported by John & Jilly Wreford*

Marcus Barcham Stevens *Co-Leader*

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Ruth Ehrlich

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Anna Bradley

Marcus Broome

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Simon Couzens

## HORNS

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Tom Rumsby

Alex Wide

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Paul Archibald

*Supported by Jeffrey Archer*

## TIMPANI

William Lockhart

*Supported by*

*Stephen & Stephanie Bourne*

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Maggie Cole

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Eamonn Dougan

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