

# Jamie Barton & Jake Heggie

**Start time:** 7.30pm

**Approximate running time:** 110 minutes including a 20-minute interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change

## Programme

**Jake Heggie** 'Music' from *The Breaking Waves*

**Henry Purcell** 'Music for a While' from *Oedipus* (arr Benjamin Britten)

**Franz Schubert** *An die Musik*

*Gretchen am Spinnrade*

*Rastlose Liebe*

**Florence Price** *We Have Tomorrow*

*The Poet and his Song*

*Night*

*Hold Fast to Dreams*

**Johannes Brahms** *Unbewegte Laue Luft*

*Meine Liebe ist Grün*

*Von ewiger Liebe*

**Jake Heggie** *What I Miss the Most*

1. Order
2. Time
3. Action
4. Music
5. You

**Jake Heggie** *Of Gods and Cats*

1. In the beginning...
2. Once upon a universe

**Jake Heggie** *Iconic Legacies: First Ladies at the Smithsonian*

1. Eleanor Roosevelt: Marian Anderson's Mink Coat
2. Mary Todd Lincoln: Abraham Lincoln's Hat
3. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis: White House Christmas Card, 1963
4. Barbara Bush: The Muppets

**Isn't it wonderful to be back to live music? Friends Jamie Barton and Jake Heggie missed it so much they've devised an evening that celebrates the healing power of music, with an exciting song cycle at its heart.**

What have you missed the most during the pandemic? For mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton it was exactly what inspired tonight's recital: connection through live music. 'There's nothing quite like feeling the energy in a room where music is being performed,' says the Grammy 2022 nominee. 'Those vibrations, as it turns out, are far more healing than I'd given them credit for pre-pandemic.'

It's this idea that inspired the central work in tonight's concert – Jake Heggie's *What I Miss The Most*. At the start of the pandemic, Barton and the prolific composer asked around 30 of their mutual friends to write something about what they were missing. After whittling down the responses to the five that really spoke to them creatively, the result is five poems that cover a gamut of feelings from anger and outrage to yearning, peace and sorrow.

Heggie says he initially found it incredibly difficult to put the words to music. 'I had a lot of trouble writing during the lockdown. Usually, when I'm writing, I'm used to a certain amount of blissful uncertainty in the studio and then having the illusion of certainty in our real lives. But in the pandemic, there was uncertainty everywhere. Plus, we had all the civil unrest here and a horrible tumultuous political

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landscape – it was just overwhelming and inescapable.' He says it was only when he finally learned to lean into the uncertainty rather than trying to fix it that he was able to write again.

The song cycle opens with a text by mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato, who wrote about orders being handed down from above, but also a lack of order. She tells us: 'The combination of Jake and Jamie requesting me to write something for them blew me away, and was sincerely a great gift for me! It gave me an "order" to reflect and memorialise what I was feeling and thinking in that exact moment. I know I will revisit it in years going forward and be forced to evaluate how well I followed the marching orders of this time.'

Next is 'Time', based on Actress and singer Patti LuPone's words. 'I was expecting something very brassy and fun and from her, and she was so blissed out being at home with her family that she said, "I really don't miss much" because she felt her life was so rich,' says Heggie.

Heggie and Barton have a longstanding relationship with nun and death penalty abolitionist Sister Helen Prejean. The composer wrote his 2000 opera *Dead Man Walking* based on her book – and Barton has sung the lead role. So it was a natural choice to ask her. Prejean's words reflect on the joy of having time at home but also feeling the restless call of civil justice. Her movement is called 'Action'.

'Music' is based on a short piece about missing music in person, written by Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who died not long after sharing her thoughts. Heggie describes it as 'one of the most beautiful, meaningful songs in the whole cycle'. And finally, pianist and conductor Kathy Kelly wrote a beautiful poem about wanting to reach through the computer screen to have human contact with the person on the other side, in the movement 'You'.

Barton says there's two distinct parts to the recital tonight. 'The first half is a celebration of music itself. Some works are the literal embodiment of that concept – 'Music', *The Poet and His Song*, and *An die Musik*, for example – and others are just a celebration of the chance to tell some of our favourite stories together with an audience in the house (*Gretchen am Spinnrade* [Franz Schubert], and *Von ewiger Liebe* [Johannes Brahms] come to mind).

Barton is renowned for using her voice and platform to champion works by women and marginalised communities that often go ignored. In this concert, she's selected songs by the African American composer Florence Price, who's finally getting the recognition she deserves, and is focusing on arias from some of Heggie's powerful female opera characters.

'With the second half, I just had to ask Jake to let us showcase him, because his music has been such an integral part of my life since I started falling in love with art song. In addition to the new song cycle, we do *Of Gods and Cats*, which was the first set of Jake's songs that I ever sang, and his magnificent *Iconic Legacies*. There's nothing quite like ending a recital singing as Barbara Bush on *Sesame Street*!'

Heggie, described as 'arguably the world's most popular 21st-century opera and art song composer' by *The Wall Street Journal*, says while he enjoyed being able to spend time with his husband at their home in San Francisco, what he really missed was being in a room with creative partners. 'I think that's part of why I was so frozen creatively; I couldn't be in the room with my creative partners, I couldn't be in the room with Jamie or the women who wrote those texts or any of my colleagues. Being in the room together is what it's all about, that's where the vibration happens. This concert is all about that vibration.'

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## Performers

**Jamie Barton** mezzo-soprano

**Jake Heggie** piano

Produced by the Barbican



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