



barbican

Classical Music

Concert programme

**Yo-Yo Ma and
Kathryn Stott**

Sat 2 Nov 7.30pm

Hall

Important information



When does the concert start and finish?

The concert begins at 7.30pm and finishes at about 9.30pm, with a 20-minute interval.



I'm running late!

Latecomers will be admitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



Please ...

Switch any watch alarms and mobile phones to silent during the performance.



Please don't ...

Take photos or recordings during the performance – save it for the curtain call.



Use a hearing aid?

Please use our induction loop – just switch your hearing aid to T setting on entering the hall.



Need a break?

You can leave at any time and be readmitted if there is a suitable break in the performance, or during the interval.



Looking for refreshments?

Bars are located on Levels -1, G and 1.



Looking for the toilets?

The nearest toilets, including accessible toilets, are located on Levels -1, G and 2.



Carrying bags and coats?

Drop them off at our free cloak room on Level -1.

Yo-Yo Ma and Kathryn Stott

Sat 2 Nov 7.30pm, Hall

Yo-Yo Ma cello
Kathryn Stott piano

Gabriel Fauré *Berceuse*
Antonín Dvořák *Songs My Mother Taught Me*
Sérgio Assad *Menino*
Nadia Boulanger *Cantique*
Gabriel Fauré *Papillon*

The first five pieces will be played as a set

Dmitri Shostakovich *Sonata in D minor for cello and piano*

- 1 Allegro non troppo
- 2 Allegro
- 3 Largo
- 4 Allegro

Interval 20 minutes

Arvo Pärt *Spiegel im Spiegel*

César Franck *Sonata in A major for violin and piano (arr cello by Jules Delsart)*

- 1 Allegretto ben moderato
- 2 Allegro
- 3 Ben moderato: Recitativo-Fantasia
- 4 Allegretto poco mosso

Produced by the Barbican

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Tonight's recital is a particularly poignant occasion, as it marks the last given by Kathryn Stott with her long-time musical partner Yo-Yo Ma. He reflects on their decades-long friendship and pays tribute to her ability to create programmes that, as he puts it, 'turn the concert hall into a communal space, at once sacred and secular'.

Music is about connection and exploration, and Kathy Stott has been my constant partner in both for many decades, sustaining me as an artist and as a human being. Among Kathy's many gifts is her ability to craft a concert programme that brings performers and audience on a shared journey, creating the unbroken circle of content, communication and reception that can turn the concert hall into a communal space, at once sacred and secular.

It is a special honour to share this space with you tonight – this is a programme of particular significance: Kathy will retire from her extraordinary career as a performer at the end of this year, and she designed this programme knowing it would likely be the last we would perform together.

I hope you will listen to tonight's concert with this in mind, hearing in its whole a celebration of the time we have spent together, and in each piece a glimpse of the explorations we have shared.

Kathy and I believe that music lives through relationships: among performers, between students and teachers, across generations. The opening suite of five pieces is testament to this, to the fact that we musicians stand on the shoulders of those who came

before us, and that we can only hope that ours will sustain those who come after.

My path and Kathy's intersect through one teacher, Nadia Boulanger. Nadia taught Kathy in her early years at the Menuhin School, south of London, and Nadia's student, Luise Vosgerchian, was my professor in college. Professor Vosgerchian liberated me from being a neurotic instrumentalist tethered to perfection and taught me how to approach music with perspective, with humanity. It feels right that Nadia Boulanger's *Cantique* – a song of praise – arrives two-thirds of the way through the suite, at its golden mean. *Cantique* anchors an opening that contains our shared musical world, from Dvořák's own homage to the transmission of music across the generations to the creation of Sérgio Assad, one of the many friends Kathy and I met in our immersion in the music of Brazil. It is a microcosm fittingly framed by the composer who has been with Kathy since the very beginning, Gabriel Fauré, friend and mentor to Nadia Boulanger!

The three pieces that follow the opening suite contain worlds of meaning for us. In the Shostakovich, we hear the pursuit of truth, against all odds; in Arvo Pärt's *Spiegel im Spiegel*, simplicity and complexity coexist to create a portrait of the universe; and

in César Franck's Sonata, composed as a wedding gift for the violinist Eugène Ysaÿe, we are given the immortal gift of love. All three are, for us, reminders of our humanity, as needed today as ever.

When I reflect on my decades of collaboration with Kathy, I realise that they have been so sustaining in part because she is fiercely grounded, yet always open to receiving the world as it is. This programme reflects this, her clarity, her curiosity and her boundless love of music.

I want to leave you with the opening lyrics of Nadia Boulanger's *Cantique*. They are words that you won't hear in our performance, lines from a poem by the Belgian poet Maurice Maeterlinck:

*A toute âme qui pleure
A tout péché qui passe
J'ouvre aux seins des étoiles
Mes mains pleins de graces*

*To every crying soul,
To each passing sin,
I open to the bosom of the stars
my hands full of grace*

I write this note with the deepest affection and greatest admiration, trying to reconcile a spirit of huge celebration with real sadness and, above all, gratitude.

© Yo-Yo Ma

One of the great duos of our time – Yo-Yo Ma and Kathryn Stott – contrast two mighty sonatas, by Shostakovich and Franck, with exquisite miniatures that take us from Estonia to Brazil via Paris.

Yo-Yo Ma and Kathryn Stott open this recital with a group of pieces centring on family relationships. As 4 November 2024 marks the centenary of Gabriel Fauré's death, it seems fitting to begin with his *Berceuse*, Op 16. This exquisitely poetic miniature of 1878–9 was the work that convinced the Paris music publisher Julien Hamelle to take on the young composer's works.

Antonín Dvořák's 'Songs My Mother Taught Me' is the fourth of his 1880 cycle *Gypsy Songs*, Op 55. The poem, by Adolf Heyduk, depicts the protagonist remembering his mother's tears as she taught him a song; now he also weeps as he teaches it to his children. It has long been borrowed by instrumentalists, seduced by the beauty of its melodic line.

The prolific Brazilian guitarist-composer Sérgio Assad rose to prominence in a duo with his brother, for which he wrote and arranged a plethora of works. He has gone on to win two Latin Grammys. *Menino* ('Little Boy') was originally for guitar duo and cello. Sparked by the simplicity of folk song, it unfolds in a series of contrasted variations.

Fauré's pupil Nadia Boulanger (1887–1979) became the most revered musical pedagogue of her day, counting among her students figures as contrasted as Aaron Copland, Grażyna Bacewicz, Astor Piazzolla and Philip Glass. Considering herself less talented a composer than her younger sister, Lili, who died tragically young, Nadia rarely pushed her own works, but today they are being recognised at last. In *Cantique* (1909), originally a song, she set the poetry of

Maurice Maeterlinck with an approach both intensely focused and touchingly simple.

It was only in 1898, 14 years after commissioning a second cello piece from Fauré following the famous *Élégie*, that Hamelle finally published *Papillon*, a showpiece with outer sections in light-bowed *perpetuum mobile* and a lyrical central episode. Fauré loathed fanciful titles, including this piece's first-mooted *Libellules* (Dragonflies) and final *Papillon* (Butterfly). 'Butterfly or dung fly – use whatever you like,' he growled.

In 1934–7 Dmitri Shostakovich, seeking to survive in a vicious new phase of the Soviet regime, started to explore a simpler, more direct musical language, notably in his Cello Sonata. Here he appears to try to please both his political overseers and his own creativity, balancing between sincerity, sarcasm and tragedy. The work was premiered on Christmas Day 1934 by Viktor Kubatsky, principal cellist at the Bolshoi Theatre, with the composer at the piano.

The sonata's conventional structure enhances rather than masks its emotional impact. The first melody unfolds over a simple accompaniment, which contrasts with a hesitant second subject centred on a sighing motif. A sinister, marked figure in the bass later recurs, powerfully transformed.

Next comes a ferocious, bitter scherzo, with the main theme on the piano beneath the cello's pounding *perpetuum mobile*. The trio episodes display 'flageolet' passages (sliding high harmonics) for the cellist.

The Largo begins on cello alone, soon joined by deep-set harmonies on the piano. An increasingly impassioned song without words ensues, over an obsessive pulse. In the finale, the contrast between klezmer-like melodies and irony-laden outbursts powers the work to its terse conclusion.

The Estonian composer Arvo Pärt is credited with creating the genre nicknamed 'holy minimalism': his spare, clear writing intensifies his music's deep spiritual charge. *Spiegel im Spiegel* dates from 1978, two

years before he emigrated to Vienna (he later moved to Berlin). Originally for violin and piano, it draws on the idea of two opposite mirrors creating a chain of reflections that extend into an illusory distance. The initial three-note treble theme gradually expands in similar fashion.

On his wedding day, 26 September 1886, the Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe received an unusual gift: a Violin Sonata from his compatriot César Franck, who was then 63 and at the peak of his powers as composer, organist and pedagogue. The delighted bridegroom and a pianist among the guests presented an impromptu performance at the party. Ysaÿe later gave the sonata's official premiere at Brussels's Museum of Modern Painting, at night – with no light permitted, for fear of damaging the pictures. Vincent d'Indy, one of Franck's disciples, remembered: 'Music, wondrous and alone, held sovereign sway in the darkness of night.'

Arranged for cello by Jules Delsart in 1887, with Franck's blessing, the sonata is symphonic in scale, replete with Franck's characteristic cyclic (recurring) themes. The first movement, possibly a portrait of Ysaÿe's bride, is gentle and intimate, its main idea based on undulating thirds. In the second movement – maybe a musical depiction of Ysaÿe himself – turbulently ecstatic music alternates with moments of introspection and occasional soaring contrasts in the major.

The *Recitativo-Fantasia* opens with a meditative exchange, bringing back earlier themes; the cello responds with rhapsodic recitative. Later, the cello whispers a new melody based on fourths and fifths, which will recur.

The finale feels suitably jubilant for the occasion for which it was written. The instruments echo one another, almost as if repeating vows, and pealing bells seem to ring out. Earlier themes are transformed with enormous flair, and finally the coda sends off the happy couple as if in a shower of musical confetti.

© Jessica Duchon

Yo-Yo Ma

Yo-Yo Ma's multi-faceted career is testament to his belief in culture's power to generate trust and understanding. Whether performing new or familiar works for cello, bringing communities together to explore culture's role in society or engaging in unexpected musical genres, he strives to foster connections that stimulate the imagination and reinforce our humanity.

Most recently, he began *Our Common Nature*, a cultural journey to celebrate the ways that nature can reunite us in pursuit of a shared future. *Our Common Nature* follows the Bach Project, a 36-community, six-continent tour of J S Bach's Cello Suites paired with local cultural programming. Both endeavors reflect Yo-Yo Ma's lifelong commitment to stretching the boundaries of genre and tradition to understand how music helps us to imagine and build a stronger society.

He was born in 1955 to Chinese parents living in Paris, where he began studying the cello with his father aged four. When he was seven, he moved with his family to New York, where he continued his cello studies before pursuing a liberal arts education.

Yo-Yo Ma has recorded more than 120 albums, is the winner of 19 Grammy Awards, and has performed for nine American presidents, most recently on the occasion of President Biden's inauguration. He has received numerous awards, including the National Medal of the Arts, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Birgit Nilsson Prize. He has been a UN Messenger of Peace since 2006, and was recognised as one of *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2020.

Kathryn Stott

Kathryn Stott is internationally recognised as one of Britain's most versatile and imaginative pianists. As well as appearing on major international concert platforms in recitals as a soloist, she is in demand as a chamber musician, playing with some of the world's leading instrumentalists. She has also directed concert series and festivals and has an extensive and wide-ranging catalogue of recordings.

Born in Lancashire, she studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Royal College of Music and was a prize-winner at the 1978 Leeds International Piano Competition. She is a professor at the Royal Northern College of Music and believes passionately in nurturing young musicians to reach their potential.

She has been performing and recording with Yo-Yo Ma for some 40 years and together they regularly tour Europe, the USA, South America and the Far East. Their latest release, *Merci*, celebrates their relationship through the music of Fauré.

She has maintained a keen interest in contemporary music, notably giving eight world premieres of works by Graham Fitkin.

Kathryn Stott has been the artistic vision behind several major festivals and concert series, notably Piano 2000 and Piano 2003 at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, following the earlier Fauré and the French Connection; Artistic Director of the Manchester Chamber Concerts Society (2009–14); Guest Artistic Director of *Incontri in Terra di Siena* (2010–11); curating concert series for Leeds International Concerts, Sheffield's Music in the Round and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic; and Artistic Director of the Australian Chamber Music Festival (2018–21).

She was appointed Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres by the French government.

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Stephen Hough in Recital Wed 4 Dec, Hall



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