



SUNDAY CLASSICS
INTERNATIONAL ORCHESTRA SEASON
2023-2024

Basel Chamber Orchestra

Sunday 1 October | 3pm

SHOSTAKOVICH Chamber Symphony (25')

MOZART Piano Concerto No. 14 K449 (22')

Interval

HOLLIGER Eisblumen (Ice Flowers) (6')

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS Fantasia on a Theme

by Thomas Tallis (17')

BACH Piano Concerto in D minor (23')

Director:

Daniel Bard

Soloist:

Angela Hewitt (piano)

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) Chamber Symphony, Opus 110a

Arrangement for String Orchestra by **Rudolf Barshai** (1924-2010)
of **String Quartet No. 8** in C minor, Opus 110 (1960)

In memory of the victims of fascism and war
(c.24 minutes)

1. Largo
2. Allegro molto
3. Allegretto
4. Largo
5. Largo

Without wishing to be over-simplistic, Shostakovich's fifteen string quartets can be heard as the private diary of his life, whilst his fifteen symphonies reflect his public life. The symphonies were subject to closer scrutiny by the Soviet authorities and so any subversive messages had to be carefully coded or stated in ambivalent terms. He did not feel so constrained when composing his chamber compositions, starting with his Cello Sonata in 1934 and then the series of string quartets from 1938 right up until his final years. Shostakovich composed his First Symphony as an ambitious 19-year-old but waited until 1938 to embark on his First String Quartet, which was published in the same year as his ground-breaking Fifth Symphony.

Shostakovich did say that he intended to compose twenty-four quartets, using all twelve major and minor keys, so complementing his twenty-four preludes and fugues for solo piano. However, he only completed the fifteen quartets, spread out at fairly regular intervals between 1938 and 1974.

Shostakovich visited Dresden in the summer of 1960 when working with a film crew on the joint German Democratic Republic-USSR film production *Five Days and Five Nights*. He was naturally greatly affected by witnessing the result of the city's destruction in February 1945 when it was carpet-bombed by Allied forces in the closing months of the War. Much of the centre of Dresden had been cleared of the rubble in the years following the end of hostilities but proper reconstruction was only to occur after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Shostakovich wrote in his 'official' account: 'The horrors of the air-raids suffered by the people of Dresden, whose stories we heard, suggested the theme for my Eighth Quartet. In only a few days, under the impression of the film we are making about what happened, I wrote the score of my new quartet. I dedicate it to the victims of the war and fascism.' (*Izvestia*, 24th September 1960).

In a letter to his longstanding friend, Isaak Glikman, he gave a somewhat different account: '.... As hard as I tried to rough out the film scores which I am supposed to be doing, I still haven't managed to get anywhere; instead I wrote this ideologically flawed quartet which is of no use to anybody. I started thinking that if some day I die, nobody is likely to write a work in memory of me, so I had better write one myself. The title page could carry the dedication: 'To the memory of the composer of this quartet'....' (*Story of a Friendship: The Letters of Dmitry Shostakovich to Isaak Glikman with a commentary by Isaak Glikman*, translated by Anthony Phillips, Faber & Faber, 1993).

The autobiographical nature of the composition is confirmed by the emphasis throughout on his personal theme, comprising the four notes D natural, E flat, C natural, B natural, the composer's initials in German notation: D.SCH (Dmitry SChostakowitsch). As well as the composer's signature, the Quartet contains musical quotes from both his own works and those of other composers. In the same letter to Glikman, Shostakovich lists his own works that are quoted: the First Symphony, the Eighth Symphony, the Second Piano Trio, the First Cello Concerto and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District*. He also includes references to Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* (Siegfried's funeral march) and the falling phrase that acts as the second subject theme in the first movement of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony.

The letter also mentions the quotation of the Revolutionary song '*Tormented by grievous bondage*'. At the time of composition Shostakovich was under great pressure to become a member of the Communist Party as Nikita Khrushchev wanted to appoint him as President of the Russian Federation Union of Composers. Glikman's commentary on the previous letter movingly describes the pressures on the composer: 'The utter fearlessness Shostakovich exhibited in his creative and artistic life coexisted with the fear Stalin's terror had

bred in him. Small wonder that, caught in the toils of years of spiritual enslavement, writing the autobiographical Eighth Quartet he gave such dramatic and heart-rending voice to the melody of the song 'Tormented by Grievous Bondage'.

Rudolf Barshai (1924-2010) was the original violist in the precursor of the Borodin String Quartet; he worked closely with Shostakovich, conducting the world premiere of his Fourteenth Symphony in 1969.

The Borodin Quartet made the first commercial recording of the Eighth Quartet in 1962, and they played it earlier to the composer at his Moscow home, hoping for his criticisms. The critic Eric Smith recalled that 'Shostakovich, overwhelmed by this beautiful realization of his most personal feelings, buried his head in his hands and wept. When they had finished playing, the four musicians quietly packed up their instruments and stole out of the room.' Barshai transcribed five of Shostakovich's quartets for string ensemble, the Eighth Quartet being the first of these transcriptions and this was personally approved by Shostakovich. The score was published in 1978 and Barshai himself made two recordings of the transcription. He kept faithfully to the original scoring and expressive markings, adding double basses to the forces to strengthen the orchestral sound. When the Jewish theme (quoted from the 1944 Second Piano Trio) appears in the *Allegro molto*, Barshai divides the strings further, providing a strikingly dramatic orchestral sound, the only occasion when Barshai significantly intervenes in the string textures.

Timothy Dowling, July 2023

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 14 in E flat major K.449,

(9 February 1784)

(c.22 minutes)

1. *Allegro vivace*

2. *Andantino*

3. *Allegro ma non troppo*

This Concerto was written in early 1784, the first of six Concertos from that year. It was the first work that Mozart entered in a catalogue of works that he kept until shortly before his death in 1791. He dated it 9th February 1784 and labelled it 'a Concerto in E flat major with accompaniment for strings, oboes and horns ad lib.' This was one of Mozart's most prolific periods, as the early months of 1784 saw him complete four piano concertos (Nos. 14 to 17) as well as the sublime Quintet for Piano and Winds, K.452, which the composer reckoned to be his greatest composition thus far.

In a letter to his father in May 1784 Mozart said that the Concerto No. 14 could be performed 'a quattro', that is with just string quartet accompaniment. And indeed, the oboes and horns play very little independent music.

This is, then, Mozart's smallest orchestra for his mature concertos. It is, on the whole, an introverted work, particularly the first two movements. The unison trill in the third bar emphasises a destabilising role (lurching the music into C minor) and comes to dominate the later dramatic development section.

The *Andantino* is perhaps less severe, but still maintains the unsettled quality of the first movement due to the syncopation of the main theme. However, a shaft of warmth enters with the lovely theme played in thirds by the piano over a rippling accompaniment provided by violas – one can imagine this as a woodwind serenade in his later concertos, but here the oboes only get to play this lovely music on its third and final appearance.

Unusually for Mozart, the most dramatic movement of this Concerto is the finale. Mozart the opera composer appears with a range of characters interacting together in delightful fashion. The pianist, after taking up the main opening melody, has a question-and-answer session with phrases passing from treble to bass in a crossed-hands section. There is a bubbling optimism to this music which has a final dramatic twist as the tempo changes from a four-square 4/4 to a dancing 6/8 for the final pages.

Heinz Holliger (b.1939)

Eisblumen – extract from *Scardanelli-Zyklus* (Scardanelli Cycle) 1975-1991

The Swiss musician Heinz Holliger was known for many years from the early 1960s as the most prominent oboist of his generation. Increasingly, however, he has taken up the conductor's baton and composition has played an ever-more important part in his musical career. The *Scardanelli Cycle* (1975-1991) is regarded by many as his crowning compositional achievement. The name 'Scardanelli' refers to the favoured penname of the German Romantic poet **Friedrich Hölderlin** (1770-1843): he often used this penname for the poems that he produced after his mental breakdown in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The Cycle is a composite work and is comprised of:
The Seasons, three sets of four songs for a *cappella* choir
Exercises for Scardanelli for small orchestra
comments, mirrors, responses, marginalia to *The Seasons*
(t)air(e) for solo flute
Excerpts from:
Tower Music for solo flute, small orchestra and tape
Ostinato Funebre for small orchestra

Eisblumen ('Ice Flowers') is a six-minute extract from the Scardanelli Cycle. It was originally scored for 2 violins, 2 violas, 2 cellos and 1 double bass, plus 4 voices ad lib. Woodwind instruments can take on the vocal lines when played outside of the full Scardanelli Cycle.

It is musically based on the final chorale of Johann Sebastian Bach's Church Cantata BWV.56 ("Come, O death, sleep's close brother"). The seven specially tuned string instruments play exclusively in natural overtones, behind which the Bach chorale gradually becomes recognizable, as if through a network of ice flowers.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1957) Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis (1910)

For double string orchestra and solo string quartet, first performed at Gloucester Cathedral on 6 September 1910
[c.15 minutes]

The composer Herbert Howells has described his overwhelming reaction to the first performance of the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* at Gloucester Cathedral as part of the Three Choirs Festival in September 1910. It was performed as an opener to a concert devoted to Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* and Howells related how he and Ivor Gurney afterwards wandered the streets of Gloucester as they came to terms with the strangeness of the new music that they had just heard.

Their response was not universally shared: the *Musical Times* damned it with rather faint praise, describing it as 'a grave work, exhibiting power and much charm of the contemplative kind, but it appeared over-long for the subject matter'.

This was the work with which Vaughan Williams found fully his own individual voice, the result of his long study of the *English Hymnal* and English folksong, the two combining together to produce a new departure for English music.

And so 6th September 2010 can be seen as significant for English music as 22nd December 1894 was for French music when the solo flute opened Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*.

What is perhaps most striking is the quiet confidence of Vaughan Williams's music; this does not sound like a tentative attempt at breaking new ground, rather it emerges fully formed and one senses that this music has already been sounding for many years. Perhaps this is not surprising given the two roots from which it sprang.

Firstly there is the theme by the Tudor composer Thomas Tallis (1505-85). Tallis included the theme in his *Psalter* produced in 1567 for Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury. Vaughan Williams had then

used the theme in his *English Hymnal* published in 1906. With Tallis's haunting theme embedded in his mind, this led him to using a type of music beloved of Tudor composers: the *Fantasia*.

Secondly, there was his love of English folk music; he had spent time in the early years of the twentieth century gathering folk songs from local singers and this proved a lifelong fascination for the composer. This strand is heard in the *Fantasia*, and in particular in the central passage beginning with the solo viola and then taken up by the other soloists.

The opening five chords immediately set the scene for the remaining fifteen minutes: two string orchestras plus solo string quartet divided into 27 parts giving a rich tapestry of organ-like sound, evoking the atmosphere of a great cathedral. Throughout the strings separate and then combine together with magical effect, the music echoing across time and space.

After the opening falling chords, over a high D on violins the lower strings twice suggest the Tallis theme with *pizzicato* notes, separated by a brief refrain motif. And then at last we hear the theme in full, over shimmering higher strings. The scene is thus set for the fantasy that follows as Vaughan Williams gently leads on his journey through the *Fantasia*, gradually building up to a climactic passage. However, it is probably inappropriate to speak of 'climax' as this climax is not a moment of excitement or high expressed emotion, rather it is the high point of gradual growth, a point of reflection from which the music subsides naturally and inevitably to its *pppp* conclusion.

Timothy Dowling, 2017

Johann Sebastian Bach (1872-1957)

Keyboard Concerto No. 1 in D minor, BWV1052:
Allegro – Adagio – Allegro [c.23 minutes]

In 1720 Bach carefully composed, produced and presented his six concertos for the Margrave of Brandenburg, thus creating one of the most illustrious job applications in the history of music. The Six Brandenburg Concertos are carefully scored for different combinations of instruments to demonstrate his knowledge and skill in instrumental and orchestral technique. This was the only especially dedicated set of concertos that Bach produced. The seven solo keyboard concertos that were published together in the late 1730s were not conceived in like manner. The dates of composition are unknown, but what is known is that all seven concertos were arrangements of earlier works, mostly composed originally for solo violin.

Bach adopted the model of the Italian concerto style and was particularly fond of the concertos of Antonio Vivaldi, copying and arranging several of Vivaldi's works for his own purpose. Bach invariably follows Vivaldi's model of the fast-slow-fast structure, employing the ritornello principle as the building block for the individual movements. 'Ritornello' translates literally as the 'little thing that returns' and refers to the orchestral opening tutti that presents the basic musical material for each movement. The ritornello can then be broken up into fragments for further development; frequently, this involves modulating to different keys. The ritornello is usually played in complete form at key points in the movement, especially at the conclusion to 'round things off'.

As a virtuoso violinist, it is not surprising that the bulk of Vivaldi's output features his particular instrument; whilst he composed concertos for many other instruments, Vivaldi did not compose for solo keyboard and so Bach was the first major composer of keyboard concertos: the fifth Brandenburg concerto can lay claim to being the first such example.

The seven solo keyboard concertos that were gathered together for publication in the late 1730s were all scored

for solo harpsichord and strings, except No. 6 which features two flutes (or recorders), betraying the fact that this is an arrangement of the fourth Brandenburg concerto. Similarly, No. 3 in D major and No. 7 in G minor are respectively transcriptions of the E major and A minor solo violin concertos. In their original formats the keyboard concertos were therefore probably first composed during his time at Cöthen (1717-1720). After moving to Leipzig in 1723 Bach took on the role as director of the city's Collegium Musicum in 1729, happy to return to producing instrumental works, this time for concerts at Zimmermann's famous Coffee House. The concertos undoubtedly had many performances there and would have been ideal works for his children to play as part of their musical education.

Bach placed the **D minor concerto** at the head of the publication in 1737 with good reason. It is the most substantial and powerful of the seven concertos. It is generally assumed to be a transcription of an earlier violin concerto that is now lost. It is the only concerto of the set that remains persistently (or even stubbornly) in the minor key throughout: the other six concertos all provide modal relief by moving to the respective relative major or minor key for their central movements. Its opening six-bar ritornello is a defiant statement in unison that sets the scene for the drama that follows. Bach frequently demonstrates his ability to create tension through the use of extended passages revolving around a pedal point, eventually providing emotional relief with tonal resolution.

It is possible to suggest an emotional or spiritual context for the D minor concerto, as Bach made a further adaptation of the music by incorporating all three movements into two of his Church Cantatas. The first two movements were transformed into arrangements for organ and orchestra (three oboes and strings) for Cantata No.146, composed for the Third Sunday of Easter,

('Jubilate Sunday') in 1726 or 1728. The first movement of the concerto serves as an introductory instrumental *Sinfonia*; Bach then superimposes a choral setting onto the slow movement of the concerto, setting the text 'We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.' Resilience is the key characteristic of the opening **Allegro**, making it an ideal work to hear if one is facing life's trials and tribulations and the priority is just to keep your head down and carry on regardless.

The trudging, emotional cost is subsequently portrayed in the central **Adagio**, the sense of tribulation being suggested by the dragging ritornello theme which then accompanies the soloist's lamenting aria.

The **Allegro finale** was later used for Cantata 188, composed for the Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity in 1728 or 1729. Although we only have a fragmentary score of this introductory *Sinfonia*, it is clear that it is an adaptation of the *finale* of the D minor keyboard concerto (and not the first movement as suggested in the studies by W. Gillies Whittaker and Alec Robertson). Despite also being in the minor key, there is a sense of exhilaration in the music and this is perhaps explained by the fact that the *Allegro Sinfonia* introduces the tenor aria 'I have put my trust in the faithful God, where my hope rests firm'. Unlike the doggedly unison ritornello themes for the opening two movements, Bach now allows more contrary movement, suggesting renewed life and positive energy. This is Bach's most substantial concerto finale.

When Bach turned to the keyboard for re-composing these seven concertos, he would naturally have had the harpsichord in mind, but they work equally well for piano and strings. Bach, as the supreme arranger, would surely have welcomed this further incarnation.

Timothy Dowling, July 2023

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DANIEL BARD

Violinist

Two time Chalmers-award winner Daniel Bard was born in Haifa, Israel, where he began his violin studies. He moved with his family to Toronto in 1990 and then studied with David Zafer. He also worked with Lorand Fenyves in Toronto, Peter Oundjian in the US, and David Takeno in London, U.K.

Daniel co-founded Trio Mondrian, a group that played together from 2007-2019. The trio received first prize at the 2007 International Chamber Music Competition in Trieste, Italy and performed in prestigious venues including Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw and La Fenice in Venice. Trio Mondrian has been named a BBT fellowship winner in 2009. Daniel is also a founding member of the Israeli Chamber Project, a chamber group active in both Israel and the USA.

One of the biggest passions of Daniel is the chamber orchestra. He has been invited by Tabeta Zimmermann to guest lead Camerata Bern, and directed numerous projects with Sweden's Camerata Nordica and Norway's Norwegian Chamber Orchestra. He was principal violist of the Amsterdam Sinfonietta from 2009 to 2016. In 2017, Daniel became concertmaster of the Basel Chamber Orchestra in Switzerland where he performed "Meta Arca" by Heinz Holliger with composer conducting. In April 2018 Daniel performed the Dutch premiere of John Woolrich's "Ulysses Awakes" with the Amsterdam Sinfonietta.

Equally at home as a violinist and violist, Daniel is invited to play chamber music concerts all across Europe and Israel. He has collaborated with artists such as Menahem Pressler, Antje Weithaas, Shmuel Ashkenzi, Tabeta Zimmermann, and performed in festivals such as Prussia Cove and Musikdorf Ernen and Peasmarsh Music Festival. Lastly, Daniel enjoys greatly sharing his passion for music-making with the next generation. He has lead both instrumental and chamber music classes at the Amsterdam Conservatory and at the chamber music sessions of the Jerusalem Music Centre.

Daniel plays on a 2020 violin made by Paul Belin from Maintal and a James Tubbs bow generously gifted to him by the late Bud Beyer, a great and inspiring mentor.



Angela Hewitt

Piano

Angela Hewitt occupies a unique position among today's leading pianists. With a wide-ranging repertoire and frequent appearances in recital and with major orchestras throughout Europe, the Americas and Asia, she is also an award-winning recording artist whose performances of Bach have established her as one of the composer's foremost interpreters. In 2020 she received the City of Leipzig Bach Medal: a huge honour that for the first time in its 17-year history was awarded to a woman.

Conducting from the piano, Hewitt has led the Toronto and Vancouver symphony orchestras, Hong Kong and Copenhagen philharmonic orchestras, Lucerne Festival Strings, Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Swedish and Zurich chamber orchestras, Salzburg Camerata, Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della Rai, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra in New York, Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa in Japan, and Vienna Tonkünstler Orchestra in Vienna's Musikverein. The upcoming 2023/24 season sees her performing with orchestras in Italy, Finland, Poland, Estonia and Switzerland, including on tour in the UK with Kammerorchester Basel as well as a tour of North East England with Royal Northern Sinfonia.

Elsewhere, Hewitt continues to present recitals, including concerts and festival appearances in Boston, Baltimore, Toronto, Ottawa, Rome, Zurich, Copenhagen, Cambridge and Stresa. She is also an artist-in-residence at London's Wigmore Hall, where, back in 2016, she launched her Bach Odyssey, performing the complete keyboard works of Bach in a series of 12 recitals across the world; the cycle was also presented in New York's 92Y, and in Ottawa, Tokyo and Florence, concluding in 2022.

Hewitt's award-winning cycle for Hyperion Records of all the major keyboard works of Bach has been described as "one of the record glories of our age" (The Sunday Times). Her discography also includes albums of Couperin, Rameau, Scarlatti, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Fauré, Debussy, Chabrier, Ravel, Messiaen and Granados. The first CD of three Mozart albums, dedicated to the composer's complete sonatas was released in November 2022, with the second slated for release in October 2023. In 2023, Hewitt's complete catalogue becomes available on all major streaming platforms, following Universal Music Group's acquisition of the independent classical label. Albums such as her critically acclaimed Diapason d'Or recording of the Goldberg Variations were included in the first release in July. A regular in the USA Billboard chart, her album Love Songs hit the top of the specialist classical chart in the UK and stayed there for months after its release. In 2015 she was inducted into Gramophone Magazine's Hall of Fame thanks to her popularity with music lovers around the world.

Born into a musical family, Hewitt began her piano studies aged three, performing in public at four and a year later winning her first scholarship. She studied with Jean-Paul Sévilla at the University of Ottawa, and in 1985 won the Toronto International Bach Piano Competition which launched her career. In 2018 Angela received the Governor General's Lifetime Achievement Award, and in 2015 she received the highest honour from her native country – becoming a Companion of the Order of Canada (which is given to only 165 living Canadians at any one time). In 2006 she was awarded an OBE from Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. She is a member of the Royal Society of Canada, has seven honorary

doctorates, and is a Visiting Fellow of Peterhouse College in Cambridge. In 2020 Angela was awarded the Wigmore Medal in recognition of her services to music and relationship with the hall over 35 years. Angela lives in London but also has homes in Ottawa

and Umbria, Italy where, eighteen years ago, she founded the Trasimeno Music Festival – a week-long annual event which draws an audience from all over the world.



BASEL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



Diversity, innovation and creativity

The Basel Chamber Orchestra is deeply rooted in the city of Basel - with its two subscription series in the Stadtcasino Basel as well as its own rehearsal and performance venue, Don Bosco Basel. With world tours and more than 60 concerts per season, the Basel Chamber Orchestra is a popular guest at international festivals and in Europe's most important concert halls.

As the first orchestra to be awarded the Swiss Music Prize in 2019, the Basel Chamber Orchestra stands out for its excellence and diversity as well as for its depth and consistency. Its interpretations are deeply immersed into the relevant thematic and compositional worlds: in the past with the "Basel Beethoven" or with Heinz Holliger and our "Schubert Cycle". Or as with the long-term project Haydn2032, the study and performance of all Joseph Haydn's symphonies up to the year 2032 under the direction of principal guest conductor Giovanni Antonini and together with the Ensemble Il Giardino Armonico. From the current season onwards, the Basel Chamber Orchestra has decided to devote itself to all the symphonies of Felix Mendelssohn under the direction of the early music specialist Philippe Herreweghe.

The Basel Chamber Orchestra frequently collaborates with selected soloists such as Maria João Pires, Jan Lisiecki, Isabelle Faust and Christian Gerhaher. The Basel Chamber Orchestra presents its broad repertoire under the artistic direction of the first violins and the baton of selected conductors such as Heinz Holliger, René Jacobs and Pierre Bleuse. The concert programmes are as diverse as the 47 musicians and range from early music on historical instruments to contemporary music and historically informed interpretations.

An important element of the work is the future-oriented education programs in large-scale participatory projects involving creative exchange with children and young people. The creative work of the Basel Chamber Orchestra is documented by an extensive and award-winning discography. The Clariant Foundation has been the presenting sponsor of the Basel Chamber Orchestra since 2019.

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