

barbican



Classical Music

Concert programme



**Christmas with
Connaught Brass**

Sun 8 Dec 4pm

Milton Court Concert Hall

Important information



When does the concert start and finish?

The concert begins at 4pm and finishes at about 6pm, 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 G, 1 and 2.



Carrying bags and coats?

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

Christmas with Connaught Brass with Zeynep Özsuca

Sun 8 Dec 4pm, Milton Court Concert Hall

Connaught Brass:

Aaron Akugbo trumpet

Harry Plant trumpet

Zoë Tweed French horn

Chris Brewster trombone

Aled Meredith-Barrett tuba

Zeynep Özsuca piano

Robin Haigh *Get Good*

Antonio Vivaldi (arr Jeffrey Stone) Concerto
in F major

Lili Boulanger (arr trumpet and piano) Two
Pieces

Terry Johns *Paolozzi's Windows*

Billy Moore (arr Every) *When Santa Got Stuck
Up The Chimney*

Trad (arr brass quintet) *Come Landlord Fill the
Flowing Bowl*

Interval 20 minutes

Gustav Holst (arr Blaskowski) 'Venus' from
The Planets

Mark-Anthony Turnage 'Elegy for Andy' and
'Tune for Toru' from *True Life Stories*

Sergei Prokofiev *Lieutenant Kijé – Suite*

Trad (arr Sarah Latto) *Little Girl Blue/O come
Emmanuel*

Johann Sebastian Bach (arr Simon Hogg)
Christmas Oratorio

Produced by the Barbican

Programme produced by Harriet Smith

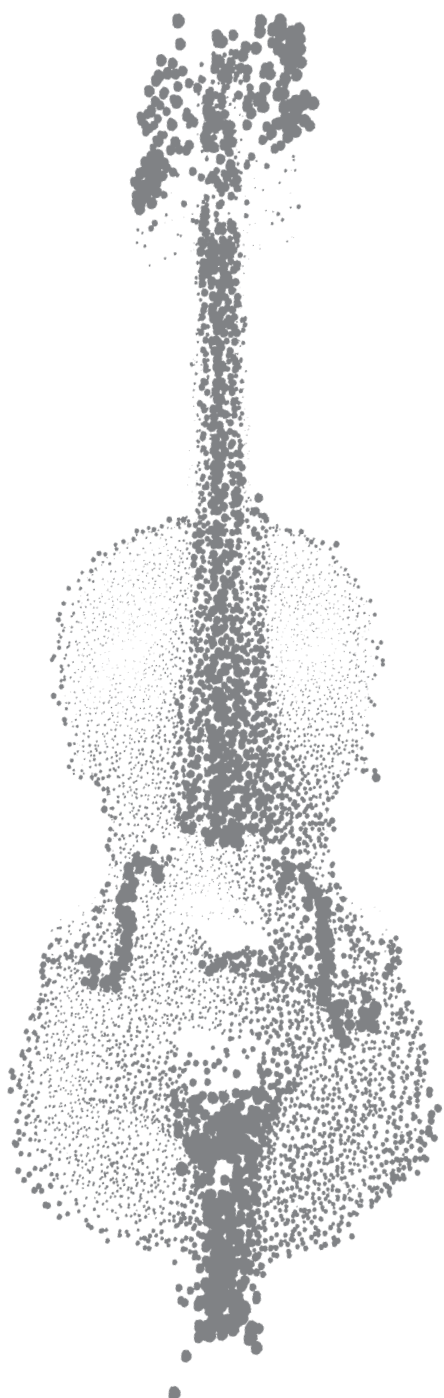
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For its Barbican debut, multi-prize-winning Connaught Brass despatches season's greetings in a cracker of a programme that gift wraps festive joy with interludes of serene reflection.

Wandering through the Düsseldorf Christmas markets recently, the icy wind and sleety rain deterring neither tourists nor locals, the sound of a lone trumpeter caught my attention. Suddenly, with the opening strains of *I'll be Home for Christmas* blooming among happy shoppers and children on scooters, the holiday season felt as if it were being officially ushered in. It wasn't the song itself that marked the beginning of the season, though, it was the instrument. A trumpet, much more than a violin or a clarinet, felt most appropriate, and it's no wonder why: brass music has been associated with Christmas for time immemorial – the carol stretching back to pagan times and the brass band coming into its own in the 19th century. Since then, the two have become inextricably linked in a way that now means whatever the music, there is something uniquely cheering about the opening bars performed by a brass ensemble.

The carol, a beloved musical tradition, is described in the opening to the *Oxford Book of Carols* by Percy Dearmer as giving 'voice to the common emotions of healthy people in language that can be understood, and music that can be shared by all.' That final piece of the puzzle – the notion of the shared carol – forms the spine of today's programme, encompassing music from a broad variety of traditions, so that there might be something in it for everyone, whether Christmas is celebrated as a religious holiday, a cultural holiday or not celebrated at all. The spirit of carolling has become – whether or not Dearmer meant it this way – truly non-partisan, something for all humans to do together.

Beginning with the Irish/British contemporary classical composer Robin Haigh's *Get Good*, Connaught Brass explore

virtuosic and lyrical contours, strains of which will return in various guises throughout the programme. It forms a good opener to the programme, too, with music that delights in being fun and irreverent. From here we move to Vivaldi's glistening Concerto in F major, which in this arrangement clothes the intricacies of the composer's writing in perhaps surprising musical colours.

The musical colours continue to bend and waver, as pianist Zeynep Özsuca joins the fray for Lili Boulanger's Two Pieces, arranged here for trumpet and piano. Originally for violin, Boulanger plays with musical shades – enough so that if you closed your eyes, you might hear a touch of Debussy. There is an Impressionistic tint here, but these pieces are also challenging. The first one slowly grows in texture, becoming more and more difficult and virtuosic as it goes. The second is a little more playful: joyful runs, jazzy rhythms and fiercely contrasting dynamics. It is a workout for its players, and a pleasure for its listeners. Terry Johns's Paolozzi's *Windows* keeps us piano-focused, with the composer's inspiring sketch of the stained-glass triptych in St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, created by the acclaimed Scottish artist Eduardo Paolozzi. This was his only work in stained glass, and he created the windows in the style he became known for – pop art; Johns describes the windows as 'a glittering example of his genius'. You can almost feel the glittering come to life in this fine work, seeing those windows in your mind's eye.

Then! The Christmas carol that perhaps we've waited for, has arrived – and what a carol it is: Billy Moore's *When Santa Got Stuck Up The Chimney*. First recorded by Ella Fitzgerald in 1950, the song (though without lyrics today) is a funny tale of misadventure. 'Santa, please, come back to my chimney/You can come back here (Please do come back)/'Cause daddy made a brand new chimney/Just for you this year,' you might sing along in your head.

Festive cheer continues with a brass arrangement of the traditional *Come Landlord Fill the Flowing Bowl*, for which, like knowing about Santa Claus's fateful night in the previous tune, it pays to know some of the lyrics: 'Come landlord fill the flowing bowl until it doth run over/For tonight we'll merry merry be/Tomorrow we'll be sober.'

Not strictly Christmas-y, as we've come to expect at this point, we are treated to a special nod to Holst (whose 150th anniversary we've been marking this year) in an arrangement of 'Venus' from *The Planets*. This planet is, of course, the Bringer of Peace, Holst referring to it as 'the most fortunate star under which to be born'. Two works from Mark-Anthony Turnage's *True Life Stories* for solo piano follow, movingly simple in the composer's idiomatic lyrical style. Similarly festive unspecific, Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kijé* Suite, sparks into life – the composer's first film music commission. It was a departure for him, Prokofiev seizing the opportunity to create something in a more accessible style.

We reach the end of our Christmas with Connaught Brass with two pieces that ready us for the beginnings of winter: the traditional carols *Little Girl Blue* and *O come Emmanuel*, followed by Bach's ebullient closing chorus from the *Christmas Oratorio* beautifully arranged for brass ensemble. We leave on a high, carried by those precious, and well-known closing notes: Bach somehow still the perfect balm at this – and all – points of our year. We remember, of course, that this season can mean so much, or nothing at all: it can carry the weight of tradition and religion, or simply be a time to reconnect with friends and family. It can be a time to reflect and take stock, planning for the new year. Whatever the festive season means to you, though, good music of all persuasions helps us set the mood, and here, we have some of the best.

© Megan Steller

Connaught Brass

Aaron Akugbo trumpet

Harry Plant trumpet

Zoë Tweed French horn

Chris Brewster trombone

Aled Meredith-Barrett tuba

Connaught Brass are winners of the inaugural Philip Jones International Brass Ensemble Competition and the Royal Over-Seas League Competition and seek to redefine how brass chamber music is perceived. Blending a deep respect for the genre's rich heritage with a fresh, youthful perspective, their performances are not only marked by vibrancy and boldness, but with warmth and approachability, reflecting the strong camaraderie at the heart of the ensemble. Through brand-new commissions, audience-favourite arrangements and a commitment to originality, Connaught Brass breathe new life into tradition.

The Connaughts have performed widely across the UK and Europe at venues including Wigmore Hall, the Lucerne Festival, De Doelen Rotterdam, Societá Filarmonica Trento, Snape Maltings, Kings Place, St George's Bristol, Edinburgh's Hidden Doors Arts Festival and Ireland's Music for Wexford, as well as appearing regularly on BBC Radio 3. This season the group make debuts here at the Barbican Centre and in Wales at the Cowbridge Festival, as well as returning to the Ferrandou Festival in France, undertaking a collaboration with pianist Zeynep Özsuca and performing extensively across the rest of the UK.

In previous years the quintet have become artists of the Tillett Trust, City Music Foundation, Kirckman Concert Society and Britten Pears Chamber Music Residency. They also undertake masterclasses at conservatoires and education work in primary and secondary schools across the UK and Europe, including those supported by the Cavatina Chamber Music Trust and the Musicians' Company.

The musicians of Connaught Brass have been principal players and members of the European Union Youth Orchestra, Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra and National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, and now perform regularly with leading orchestras, as well as recording with and supporting artists such as Bruno Mars, The Jonas Brothers, Stormzy, Lil' Nas X, Jamie Cullum, Rag'n'Bone Man, Dave, Giggs and Gregory Porter.

Zeynep Özsuca

The Turkish pianist Zeynep Özsuca has performed worldwide as a soloist, chamber musician and accompanist. She began piano lessons at the age of four and continued her studies at the Ankara and Oberlin Conservatories and Berlin's Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler. She now lives in London and pursues a career as concert pianist, répétiteur and educator.

She has collaborated with conductors such as Gustavo Dudamel, François-Xavier Roth, Sir Simon Rattle and Sir Antonio Pappano, and with singers including Sir Willard White, Magdalena Kožená, Rolando Villazón, Gerald Finley, Annette Dasch and Michael Schade, among others. She has worked as a répétiteur and orchestra member with renowned ensembles including the London Symphony Orchestra, Berlin, BBC and London Philharmonic orchestras, BBC Concert Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Staatsoper Berlin, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and Glyndebourne Festival.

As a chamber musician, she has performed on prestigious international stages, including the Berlin Philharmonie, Wigmore Hall, Wiener Konzerthaus, Hamburg Elbphilharmonie and Amsterdam Concertgebouw, as well as giving live radio broadcasts on Deutschlandfunk, Deutschlandradio and RBB Kulturradio (Germany), RNE (Spain) and BBC Radio 3 and 4. She also regularly appears in concert with her duo partners saxophonist Jess Gillam, clarinettist Sacha Rattle and trumpeter Aaron Akugbo, as well as her wind and piano sextet Berlin Counterpoint.

Zeynep Özsuca has a close working relationship with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, where she has acted as accompanist, music director of opera scenes and is currently a lecturer on the Opera Skills course.

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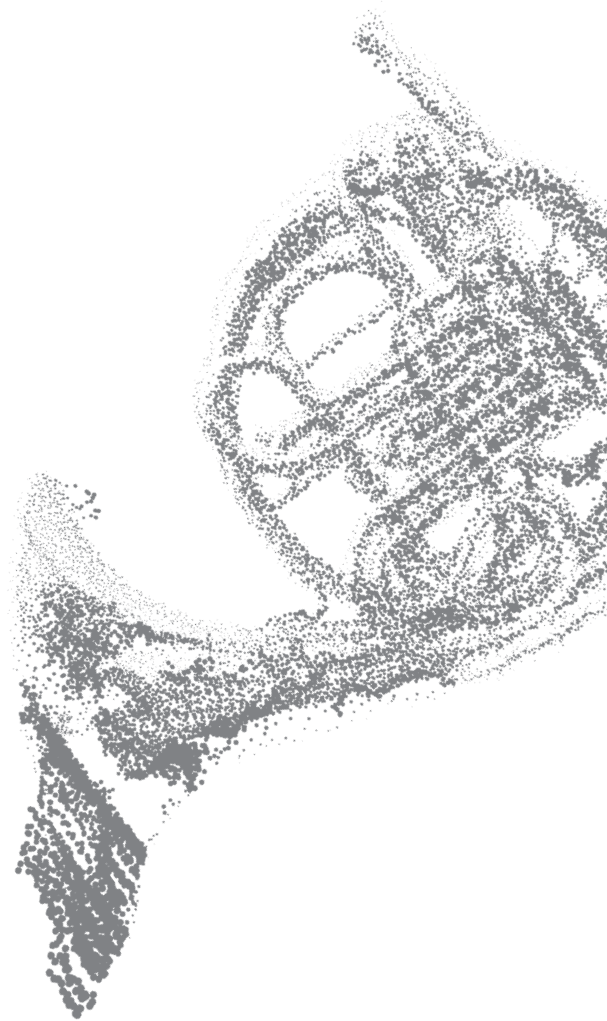


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