

**Igor Levit plays  
Beethoven, Bartók and  
Brahms**

Wed 19 Feb 7.30pm  
Barbican Hall

Part of Igor Levit Featured Artist

Part of Beethoven 250

Part of Barbican Presents 2019–20

**barbican**

**1** Igor Levit plays Beethoven, Bartók and Brahms

Wed 19 Feb, Hall

# Important information



## When does the concert start and finish?

The concert begins at 7.30pm and finishes at about 9.20pm, 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 refreshment?

Bars are located on Levels -1, G and 1. Pre-order interval drinks to beat the queues. Drinks are not allowed in the hall.



## Looking for the toilets?

The nearest toilets, including accessible toilets, are located on Levels -1 and 1. There is a further accessible toilet on Level G.



## Carrying bags and coats?

Drop them off at our free cloakroom on Level -1.

# Welcome to tonight's performance

**A warm welcome to tonight's concert, the last in our Featured Artist series celebrating the extraordinary musicianship of pianist Igor Levit.**

Though still only in his early thirties, Igor Levit is already hugely acclaimed. He combines a fearsome intellect with an ease at the piano that allows him to tackle the most demanding of repertoire and, most importantly, bring it alive for his audiences. He first made his name as a Beethoven pianist so it's apt that we start with the mighty *Grosse Fuge*, originally written for string quartet but then adapted by the composer for two pianists.

Igor Levit loves the journey that is intrinsic to sets of variations and he and Markus Becker perform Brahms's masterly *Variations on a Theme of Haydn*, better known in its incarnation for orchestra. After the interval they are joined by percussionists Klaus Reda and Andreas Boettger for Bartók's brilliantly iconoclastic Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion.

Tonight's concert promises to be a stunning finale to what has been a wonderful series. I hope you enjoy it.

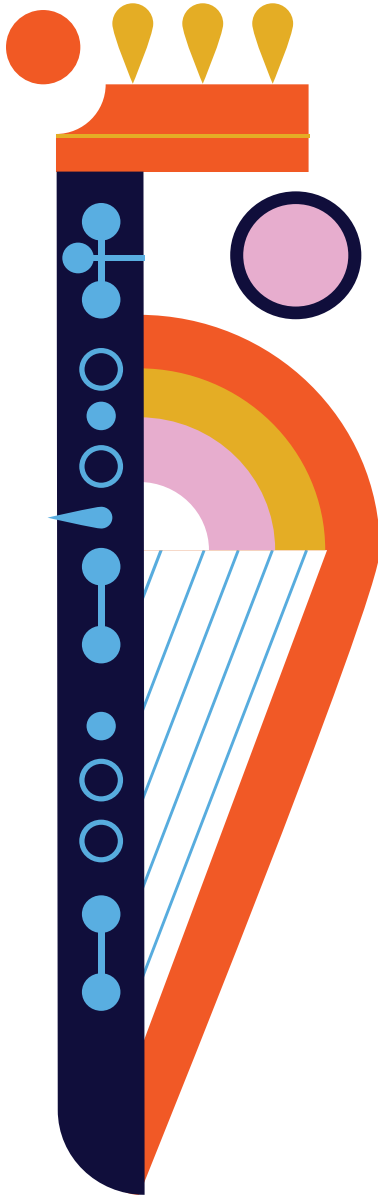
**Huw Humphreys**  
Head of Music

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Programme produced by Harriet Smith  
All information correct at time of printing  
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# Igor Levit plays Beethoven, Bartók and Brahms

Wed 19 Feb 7.30pm  
Barbican Hall

**Beethoven** *Grosse Fuge*

**Brahms** *Variations on a Theme of Haydn*

**interval** 20 minutes

**Bartók** *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*

**Igor Levit** piano

**Markus Becker** piano

**Klaus Reda** percussion

**Andreas Boettger** percussion

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# Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

## **Grosse Fuge (piano, four hands), Op 134 (1826)**

### Beethoven and the fugue

The first piece we hear tonight is Beethoven's so-called *Grosse Fuge* – which, as its name suggests, operates on a big scale. If J S Bach started the trend with works such as *The Art of Fugue*, Beethoven propelled it roaringly into the 19th century and incorporated this intense contrapuntal form into bigger and bigger landscapes. He loved nothing more than using fugues to end piano sonatas, most famously in his *Hammerklavier Sonata*, Op 106.

That has a theme (the 'subject') as obstreperous as the one that launches the *Grosse Fuge* but elsewhere he can conjure quite different moods, not least the uproarious one that appears as the 32nd variation in the massive *Diabelli Variations*. He could also use the form to monumental effect, nowhere more powerfully than in parts of the finale of his Ninth Symphony.

**For Igor Stravinsky, Beethoven's monumental *Grosse Fuge* ('Grand Fugue') was 'an absolutely contemporary piece of music that will be contemporary forever'.**

If by 'contemporary' he was also implying 'difficult to understand' then he hit the mark. In Stravinsky's own day many outstanding string quartets, including those legendary Beethoven advocates the Busch Quartet, refused to play it. And even today, two centuries after it was composed, a few brave musicians and commentators will still admit to finding it forbidding, perplexing, or both. Then there's the question of whether it fulfils its originally intended purpose, as the finale of the six-movement String Quartet in B flat, Op 130. When the Op 130 Quartet had its first performance in Vienna, in 1826, it was played with the *Grosse Fuge* as finale. The rest of the Quartet went down well – in fact the second and fourth movements had to be repeated – but by all accounts the audience was completely bewildered by the finale. Reportedly Beethoven was furious: 'And why didn't they encore the Fugue? That alone should have been repeated! Cattle! Asses!'

But it seems he was a lone voice. A reviewer for a prominent musical journal clearly spoke for many when he described the *Grosse Fuge* as 'incomprehensible, like Chinese', expressed pity for the struggling musicians and wondered if Beethoven's deafness hadn't finally led him astray. Beethoven's publisher Matthias Artaria was so worried about it that he set about trying to persuade Beethoven to publish the Fugue separately, offering him a generous extra fee for a new finale. To everyone's surprise, Beethoven

## Glossary

**Fugue** A fugue takes a theme (the 'subject'), often short, which is first heard in one part (known as a 'voice' even in instrumental fugues) and is then taken up at a different pitch by each other part in turn. The 'subject' dominates the entire fugue and it's a very strict form of writing, which makes it tricky for the composer.

**Passacaglia** A work or movement built from a melodic pattern (often in the bass) that is repeated without change, while the composer varies themes and harmonies above it.

agreed, and the *Grosse Fuge* appeared in print in splendid isolation, as Op 133. And thus it remained, admired, feared, much discussed but rarely played, for well over a century. Even less well known, however, is the arrangement for piano four hands, which Beethoven made soon after that ill-starred first performance. Artaria had originally approached the composer Anton Halm to do the job, but Beethoven wasn't impressed with Halm's efforts and so made the arrangement himself, giving it another opus number, Op 134 – which suggests that he saw it as in some ways taking another view on the music.

If so, he had a point. For those who know the original quartet version the opening is quite startling: in place of massed string octaves we have a brusque tremolando for both pianists. The tentative, fragmentary slow introduction that follows also makes a subtly different impression played expressively on piano rather than on strings. In the colossal first fugue the piano's percussive sonorities are well suited to the element of strife in the music, especially when the bass is reinforced in octaves, and given cleaner intonation it's easier to hear the intricacies of the harmonic writing. Transparent, crystalline piano textures are also well suited to the slower, quieter double fugue that follows. A sense of struggle, if not 'against' the instruments, then in pushing them to their technical and expressive limits, is a key ingredient in many of Beethoven's late works, but there's no doubt that some of this music is significantly easier on the piano than on solo strings. As the *Grosse Fuge* builds to its massive climax some may miss the edginess of the original, but others may find that the musical essence comes into focus in a way rarely, if ever, matched by even the finest string ensembles. Swings and roundabouts? Perhaps Op 134 is the most striking proof of the pianist Arthur Schnabel's remark that some great music is 'greater than it can ever be played'.

Programme note by Stephen Johnson



# Ludwig van Beethoven

## (1770–1827)



When Ludwig van Beethoven was born in 1770, many composers were still uniformed servants. By the time of his death in 1827 the composer had become a new type of Romantic hero, a musical freedom fighter, and a voice of hope at a time when political idealism had failed. Brought up in the Rhineland city of Bonn, Beethoven suffered horrible abuse at the hands of his alcoholic musician father, but found refuge and strength in music. His talents were soon recognised, and in 1792 he went to Vienna to study with the world-famous composer Joseph Haydn. Their relationship was strained, as were many of his later relationships with his aristocratic patrons (authority figures always posed a problem for him), but Beethoven learned a great deal from Haydn and his style advanced in leaps and bounds during this period. At first Beethoven was more successful as a concert pianist than as a composer, but after the appearance of his First Symphony, First Piano Concerto and earliest set of string quartets, Op 18 in 1800 it was clear that a startling new force had taken to the musical stage.

Success was followed by profound crisis, as Beethoven began to realise that something

was seriously wrong with his hearing. As ever he found strength in composing. His Third Symphony, the 'Eroica' ('Heroic', 1803) takes symphonic writing onto a new epic and personal-dramatic plane. Initially the 'Eroica' was to have been dedicated to Napoleon Bonaparte, but Beethoven was incensed when Napoleon proclaimed himself Emperor, and his attitude to the former French Revolutionary hero remained complicated.

Protests against tyranny and expressions of defiant hope can be heard in such later masterpieces as the Fifth Symphony (1807–8) and his only opera *Fidelio* (1805, revised 1814), but after Joseph Bonaparte's defeat at Vitoria in 1813 Beethoven hymned the victorious British general Wellington in his *Wellingtons Sieg* – the so-called 'Battle' Symphony – significantly not regarded now as among his finest compositions.

After a year of near silence in 1816, Beethoven entered a new creative phase, often referred to as his 'late' period. Personally these years were scarred by his bitter protracted struggle with his sister-in-law for custody of his nephew Karl. Beethoven won the legal battle, but Karl's increasing unhappiness led to his attempted suicide in 1826, which probably accelerated Beethoven's final decline the following year. Yet this same period saw the creation of some of his most searching music: not just the monumental choral-orchestral Ninth Symphony (1822–4) and *Missa solemnis* (1819–23) but the most remarkable sequence of piano sonatas and string quartets ever composed. These extraordinary works, sometimes anguished or desolate yet also with moments of profound inner calm, have acquired the significance of spiritual documents. Thus Beethoven, the embodiment of heroic individualism, left this world as a different kind of visionary, finding meaning not in politics, but in things apparently beyond this world.

Profile by Stephen Johnson

# Johannes Brahms (1833–97)

## Variations on a Theme of Haydn, Op 56b, 'St Anthony Variations' (1873)

**Brahms wasn't the first composer to explore the music of the remoter past. Beethoven, for example, had found new kinds of creative stimulus in studying Bach and Handel, especially their fugues, which continued to challenge and inspire him to the end of his creative life.**

But to many of Brahms's contemporaries his growing interest in such music would have seemed eccentric to say the least. Why bother with the 'primitive' efforts of Renaissance, Baroque and early Classical composers? Music had progressed – moved on. Even an important figure such as Haydn might be acknowledged as a pioneer, but surely his significance now lay in what he had inspired in others.

Brahms knew better. The *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* was his tribute to a composer he not only admired and emulated but also loved deeply. The *Haydn Variations* may not often sound like Haydn, but their seemingly effortless fusion of imaginative richness and technical sophistication was a quality Brahms saw as typical of the older Viennese master. In addition, Haydn had enriched his own art with seemingly anachronistic technical devices, and Brahms duly does the same thing in these Variations. In the slower, minor-key Variation 4, for instance, he revives the then archaic technique of 'invertible counterpoint' – treble and bass lines constantly swap over – but the result is warm and atmospheric, far from dry. Later, in the finale, he brings back another forgotten practice, building up almost the entire section over a regularly repeating bass line (the technical term for this is 'Passacaglia'), creating an impression of steadily mounting exhilaration. It is now believed that the theme was probably composed by Haydn's star pupil,

Ignaz Pleyel, not by the master himself. But no matter: the spirit of the tribute remains.

Brahms was 40 when he wrote his *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, but he was still relatively inexperienced as a composer of orchestral music. In some ways the *Haydn Variations* were a practice run for the First Symphony he was to complete – after protracted, agonising struggles – three years later. With characteristic caution, Brahms wrote the *Haydn Variations* first as a duet for two pianos, and it is this version we hear in this concert. The theme, headed 'Corale St Antonii' in the wind partita from which it is taken, is a gift to a composer of variations. The basic elements of the melody are simple but highly distinctive, so that no matter how much Brahms may decorate or vary them the outlines are usually recognisable. There's also an unusual, irregular rhythmic pattern: two five-bar phrases at the beginning and a three-bar phrase at the end. This overall pattern is preserved in most of the variations, so that we sense – if only subliminally – that something remains constant wherever Brahms's fantasy may lead him. Even the brilliant scherzo-like Variation 5 and the lilting dance of Variation 7 follow this rhythmic template exactly.

The work was one of Brahms's first big successes – when it was performed at London's Crystal Palace in 1874 it was encored immediately. Since then it has remained one of his most popular and influential pieces. Not for the first time in Brahms's career, profound engagement with the past pointed the way to the future.

Programme note by Stephen Johnson

**interval** 20 minutes



# Johannes Brahms

## (1833–97)



Brahms's father, a Hamburg town musician, initially brought up the young Johannes to follow in his footsteps, making sure he could play horn, cello and piano. But it was at the latter he excelled, performing Bach, Mozart and Beethoven in public and learning the core of his compositional craft by modelling movements on their works and by composing variations and songs; he developed a lifelong love of folk song and Hungarian Gypsy music. In 1853, aged 20, Brahms visited the Schumanns – a life-changing experience, bringing him fame, publication of his early works and access to their library, where he broadened his compositional study to include Renaissance and Baroque choral music, counterpoint and instrumental forms. Schumann encouraged him to write for larger forces, and his First Piano Concerto (1854–9) and First Serenade (1857–8) were at stages in their genesis intended as symphonies.

The 1860s saw a flowering of chamber music, including the First Cello Sonata (1862–5), Horn Trio (1865), songs and sets of piano variations, including the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel* (1861), about which Wagner maintained (before Brahms had become a

serious rival to be attacked): 'One sees what may yet be achieved in the old forms, when someone comes who understands how to handle them.' He composed his choral masterpiece *A German Requiem* in the latter half of the decade, giving its first (nearly) complete performance on Good Friday 1868 in Bremen Cathedral. Brahms had moved to Vienna and become involved in the rediscovery of Bach and Schubert there, giving the first Viennese performances of their works with choral and orchestral societies.

He at last finished his First Symphony in 1876 – the year Wagner opened Bayreuth – which inaugurated a decade of large-scale works for orchestra and soloists carrying forwards the Beethovenian legacy: the Symphonies Nos 2–4 (1877, 1883 and 1884–5), the Violin Concerto (1878), Second Piano Concerto (1878–81) and Double Concerto (1887). In 1890 he intended to retire, but met the great clarinettist Richard Mühlfeld and composed chamber music showcasing the instrument, notably the Clarinet Quintet (1891), which immediately became one of his most loved works, as it remains to this day. His last music, 11 chorale preludes for organ, returns overtly to Bachian models. Thus Brahms fashioned an individuality of voice based on profound study and understanding of a long historical perspective. Yet he was in some ways a Janus figure: the power and immediacy of his works rest on compositional subtlety and intricacy which particularly appealed to the Second Viennese School; Schoenberg characterised him as 'the progressive', from whom he had learnt 'economy yet richness'.

Profile © Robert Pascall

'I played over the music of that scoundrel Brahms. What a giftless bastard! It annoys me that this self-inflated mediocrity is hailed as a genius. Why, in comparison with him, Raff is a giant, not to speak of Rubinstein, who is after all a live and important human being, while Brahms is chaotic and empty dried-up stuff.'

a diary entry by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky dated 9 October 1886

## A bluffer's guide to ... Bartók

Bartók was, together with his friend Zoltán Kodály, one of the first true ethnomusicologists – recording traditional songs and dances not only from their native Hungary but also as far afield as Turkey and Algeria. This influenced Bartók's own musical style greatly, helping him to move from a generalised Romantic view of Hungarian music inherited from Liszt to an authentic style of writing that can be heard in the sets of *Hungarian* and *Romanian Dances* and *Folk Songs*, as well as *Mikrokosmos*, an innovative teaching method made up of six books moving from easy to very difficult.

Bartók was also a musical risk-taker, a Modernist, and that is particularly evident in works such as the raucously brilliant ballet *The Miraculous Mandarin* and the First Piano Concerto and Piano Sonata, all of which date from the mid-1920s.

He was equally fascinated by the coloristic possibilities of instruments: both the Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion and the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* explore sound worlds that range from brilliant extroversion to hushed gentleness.

Though Bartók was an exceptional pianist, he also wrote a cycle of six string quartets which are cornerstones of the 20th-century repertoire.

# Béla Bartók (1881–1945)

## Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion (1937)

1 Assai lento – Allegro molto

2 Lento, ma non troppo

3 Allegro non troppo

In the 19th century and the early years of the 20th, Western classical music was dominated by two kinds of instrument: the piano and strings. In an age that tended to place a high value on the expression of personal emotion, the stringed instruments' near-vocal qualities made them ideal vehicles for conveying sentiment, while the piano's increasing ability to sustain notes and invest them with a wide variety of colour and affective nuance was one of its main selling points. But as the 20th century wore on, and particularly after the catastrophe of the First World War, attitudes changed markedly. All that Romantic emotionalism was now associated with the discredited past. Music itself needed to be re-created, freed from pretentious, narcissistic baggage. The arch-modernist Stravinsky appeared to lead the way, turning his back on sentiment-laden string writing and delighting in bringing out the piano's percussive qualities.

Bartók's attitude was more equivocal. In his ferocious *Allegro barbaro*, composed in 1911, he seems to be well ahead of the game – anything less like the luxurious lyricism of his decidedly old-world contemporary Rachmaninov is hard to imagine. But only a few years later Bartók composed the second of his six string quartets, in which abrasive and dislocating modernism alternates with a highly-charged expressive style recalling the inwardness of late Beethoven. Was there a need to balance militant anti-modernism with something more mollifying – and vice versa? That might partly explain why, in 1937, Bartók was able to work simultaneously on two hugely contrasting works: the Violin Concerto (later No 2), in which mingled love and pain for his native Hungary colour many of the main ideas, and the Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, premiered by Bartók and his wife Ditta Pásztory-Bartók the following year. Seven years later, when Bartók composed his Third

Piano Concerto for Ditta (soon, as he realised, to be widowed), he allowed some of his evident tender feelings for her to emerge in the music. Here, however, without the sound of string instruments to lure it into warmer expressive territories, the music maintains an objective, even impassive, mask almost throughout. The piano writing is short on expression markings; the parts for the two percussionists by contrast are full of precise instructions: in the closing pages the side-drummer is instructed to play 'with two very light and thin sticks', and the cymbal-player is told to strike the metal 'with the fingernail, or with the blade of a pocketknife, on the very edge'.

Bartók's meticulous study of the folk music of Hungary and the Balkan regions leaves its mark – most noticeably on the rhythmic character of the Sonata. The first movement is an impressive study in rhythmic variation within one sustained metre: the basic 9/8 (3 + 3 + 3) is broken up as 3 + 2 + 2 + 2 in the main Allegro molto theme, then becomes a more teasing 4 + 2 + 3 in the contrasting second theme. Contrast of keys had always been the driving dynamic element in Classical first-movement sonata form; here Bartók gives rhythm the defining role. A fabulously inventive 'Night music' follows, with piano chant emerging from the mysterious sounds of unpitched percussion. Although a declared atheist, Bartók is said to have remarked that the sounds of the Hungarian Plain at night aroused in him something close to religious feeling, though the spirit of this music is still a long way from Romantic notions of the sublime. After this the finale attempts jollity, though some have detected a bitter streak behind its dancing folkish gaiety. That would be understandable: soon to be exiled from his native land, Bartók was under no illusions about where humanity was heading in 1937.

Programme note by Stephen Johnson

# Béla Bartók

## (1881–1945)



Béla Bartók was born on 25 March 1881 in Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary, now known as Sânnicolau Mare, Romania, near the border between the two countries (the name of the town translates as 'Great Saint Nicholas'). Having lost their father at an early age, the young Bartók and his younger sister lived with their mother, a schoolteacher, in a succession of provincial towns before settling in the city of Pozsony (now Bratislava, Slovakia). At the age of 18, Bartók moved to Budapest to attend the Conservatory as a composer and pianist.

Like any young musician growing up under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Bartók was steeped in the music of Beethoven and Brahms. He first discovered the ancient layers of Hungarian folk music through a chance encounter and then through his friendship and collaboration with Zoltán Kodály. Folk music made it possible for Bartók to create an original musical idiom that was authentically Hungarian and, at the same time, at the forefront of international modernism.

The young composer began his ethnomusicological fieldwork in 1906 and eventually became one of the leading exponents of the budding discipline of folk music research. He authored numerous books and articles on Hungarian, Romanian and Slovak folk music,

occasionally venturing even further afield, with research trips to Biskra, Algeria (1913) and Turkey (1936). His work in folk music had an immediate and fundamental effect on his musical style; turning away from the Romantic nationalism of such early works as *Kossuth* (1903) or the *Suite No 1* (1905, later revised), he achieved an artistic breakthrough with his *14 Bagatelles* for piano (1908), his *String Quartet No 1* (1908–9) and the opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (1911, later revised), all of which, in different ways, reflect the new discoveries and synthesise them with Western influences, especially that of Claude Debussy. Two more stage works followed: the ballet *The Wooden Prince* (completed 1917) and the pantomime *The Miraculous Mandarin* (completed 1924, later revised), the latter being Bartók's most modernistic score.

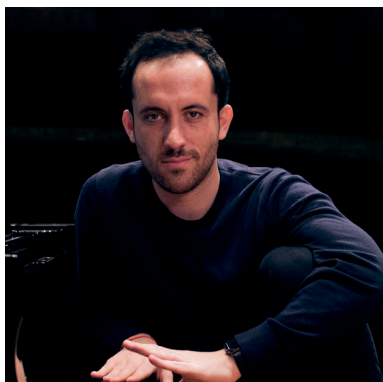
Bartók largely stopped collecting folk music after the First World War. The 1920s and early 1930s were a time of extensive analytical work on the previously gathered material. A major stylistic renewal resulted in such masterworks as the *Piano Concertos Nos 1 and 2*, the *String Quartets Nos 3 and 4* and the deeply moving *Cantata profana*. Later in the 1930s, Bartók composed *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, the *Violin Concerto No. 2* and the *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*, widely regarded as the summits of his oeuvre. Through all these years, Bartók also maintained a busy schedule as a concert pianist and a professor of piano at the Budapest Academy of Music.

Although not personally threatened by Nazism, he found he could not live under its shadow and, in 1940, he emigrated to the USA with his former pupil and second wife, Ditta Pásztory. During the American years, he composed what became one of his most popular works, the *Concerto for Orchestra* (1943, rev. 1945), as well as the *Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin* and the *Piano Concerto No 3*. He died of leukaemia in New York City on 26 September 1945.

Profile by Peter Laki

# About the performers

Felix Broeder/Sony Classical



## Igor Levit piano

Hailed by the *New York Times* as 'one of the essential artists of his generation', Igor Levit was named the 2018 Gilmore Artist and that same year won the Royal Philharmonic Society's Instrumentalist of the Year. He is the Artistic Director of the Chamber Music Academy and the Standpunkte Festival at the Heidelberg Spring Festival and last year was appointed professor at his alma mater, the University of Music, Drama and Media in Hanover.

In September 2019 Sony Classical released Igor Levit's highly anticipated first recording of the complete Beethoven sonatas. This season also marks the start of a series of three Beethoven sonata-cycles at the Lucerne Festival, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg and Stockholm's Konserthuset. The end of the season will see him on tour in the USA with an all-Beethoven sonata programme – appearing at, among others, New York's Carnegie Hall, Princeton University, the Kennedy Center in Washington DC and San Francisco's Davies Symphony Hall.

This season he is also the Featured Artist here at the Barbican. The residency comprises a solo recital plus two chamber concerts, with repertoire ranging from Beethoven to Messiaen.

Orchestral engagements will see him on tour in Europe with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Manfred Honeck, and returns among others to the Cleveland Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester and London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Highlights of past seasons include his debuts with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, as well as international tours with the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

Born in Nizhny Novgorod in 1987, Igor Levit moved to Germany with his family at the age of 8. He completed his piano studies at the Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media in 2009 with the highest academic and performance scores in the history of the institute.

He has an exclusive contract with Sony Classical and his debut disc of Beethoven's last five sonatas won the *BBC Music Magazine* Newcomer of the Year Award and the Royal Philharmonic Society's Young Artist Award (both 2014). His second recording featured the complete Bach *Partitas*, while his third, featuring works by Bach, Beethoven and Rzewski, won *Gramophone's* Instrumental Award and Record of the Year in 2016.

In Berlin, where he makes his home, Igor Levit plays a Steinway D Grand Piano, kindly given to him by the Trustees of Independent Opera at Sadler's Wells.



Irene Zandei



### Markus Becker piano

Markus Becker has made a name for himself as a pianist at home in repertoire ranging from JS Bach to Wolfgang Rihm. He is equally in demand as a programme director, known for putting together richly creative ideas. He is also, unusually among classical pianists, renowned for his jazz improvisations.

He regularly performs at the Klavier-Festival Ruhr, Schleswig-Holstein Festival and Kissinger Sommer, among others. He has played with leading orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonic, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, NDR, WDR and SWR Symphony orchestras and BBC National Orchestra of Wales. He has appeared with conductors such as Claudio Abbado, Howard Griffiths, Michael Sanderling and Thierry Fisher.

As a chamber musician he has worked with Albrecht Mayer, Nils Mönkemeyer, Adrian Brendel, Igor Levit, Sharon Kam and Alban Gerhardt.

He studied with Karl-Heinz Kämmerling and for many years benefited from advice from Alfred Brendel. Since 1993 he has been a professor at the Hanover University for Music, Drama and Media.

Markus Becker's discography has been recognised with a number of prizes, including three ECHO Klassik Awards, as well as the German Critics' Choice Award and the Opus Klassik award in 2019. Having made albums for EMI, Decca, Thorofon and CPO, he now records mostly for Hyperion. His recording of Reger's complete piano works on 12 CDs (Thorofon) is already considered a benchmark.



### Klaus Reda percussion

Klaus Reda studied at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague and later with Andreas Boettger at the Freiburg University of Music.

As well as being Principal Timpanist of the NDR Radiophilharmonie in Hanover, he is also a keen chamber musician.

He has worked with, among others, the Paratore, Reine Elisabeth and Silver-Garburg piano duos, the Nomos Quartet, Arte Ensemble, Ensemble Modern, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and the Merlin Ensemble Wien.





### Andreas Boettger percussion

Andreas Boettger received his first percussion lesson in 1968 in Guinea, West Africa. He subsequently studied with Bernhard Wulff at the Freiburg University of Music, after which he became a member of Ensemble Modern. During this time, he took part in a range of projects, including a 1982 South American tour and Frank Zappa's 1992 *Yellow Shark* album. In 1983 he joined the Karlheinz Stockhausen Ensemble, performing internationally with the composer, including many world premieres and opera productions such as 'Montag' and 'Dienstag' from *Licht*.

As a concert percussionist, he has performed works by Boulez, Cage, Henze, Helmut Lachenmann, Nono and Takemitsu at international festivals. He has been Professor of Percussion and Timpani at the Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media since 1994.

## Five things you need to know about Igor Levit

His first-ever recording was of Beethoven's last five sonatas, a daring debut by any standards. He was just 25 when he made it.

His Twitter handle reads: Human being. Citizen. European. Pianist.

He bears that out by speaking out on matters political as well as musical.

And caused something of a rumpus when he performed Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* as an encore at the First Night of the 2017 Proms, which many saw as a pro-European statement.

He's a man obsessed with variation form, and his third recording was of three giants of the repertoire: Bach's *Goldbergs*, Beethoven's *Diabellis* and Frederic Rzewski's *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!*.

# We hope to see you again soon

If you enjoyed today's performances, we can recommend the following concerts:

Benjamin Ealovega



## Simon Trpčeski in recital Tue 25 Feb 7.30pm, Hall

Charismatic pianist Simon Trpčeski performs a flamboyantly colourful recital ranging from Brahms's homage to his beloved Schumann to the steel of Prokofiev's wartime sonata, as well as a spectacular solo transcription of Mussorgsky's dazzling orchestral phantasmagoria.

Chris Lee



## New York Philharmonic: Mahler Symphony No 1 Thu 30 Apr 7.30pm, Hall

Jaap van Zweden makes his first London appearance as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic conducting Mahler's barnstorming First Symphony. Daniil Trifonov joins them for Mozart's poised Piano Concerto No 25.

## Discover the Barbican

From the sunken depths of the theatre to the soaring heights of the Barbican towers, tours are a great introduction to the history of our iconic Brutalist architecture. You can also visit Level G, a vibrant space where you can see installations, commissions and events. It's always open and always free, whatever time you choose to visit.

