



City of Birmingham
Symphony Orchestra

20 February 2018

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's Debussy Festival
Curated by Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla
16 – 25 March 2018

In March 2018, the **City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO)** presents the **Debussy Festival**, a major celebration of the composer's work across two weekends, to mark the centenary of his death. The festival is the largest-scale artistic collaboration to-date between the **CBSO, Town Hall Symphony Hall, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG), Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, University of Birmingham, Ikon Gallery and The Electric Cinema.**

The Debussy Festival has been conceived by **CBSO Music Director Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla**, inspired by the composer's search for beauty, his vision and influences, and the music he inspired. The festival includes all of Debussy's major works, with complementary pieces by composers with a strong connection to Debussy's music and world premieres by contemporary composers who have been inspired by his work.

The festival – the largest event of its kind in the country - is centred around eight concerts at Symphony Hall, Birmingham. There will also be a series of chamber music concerts at CBSO Centre from CBSO musicians and Royal Birmingham Conservatoire musicians, who will also perform Debussy piano music and songs in the Conservatoire's new recital hall. Concerts are themed to the different facets of Debussy's work, highlighting his versatility as a composer

In addition to concerts, the festival also encompasses film, free talks and a Debussy 'Pianoathon' for the general public to take part in over two days at Birmingham New Street Station.

Tickets are available for individual concerts, or festival passes are available. A Weekend Pass is available at £50 per weekend for all the Symphony Hall concerts, and a Weekend Pass Extra at £55 is also available, to include the chamber music concerts at CBSO Centre. Holders of both passes can obtain 50% off Debussy Festival concerts at Town Hall Birmingham and Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

Full details on all Debussy Festival events can be found at cbsoco.uk/debussy

The Debussy Festival has been made possible through the generous support of Barry and Frances Kirkham, Jerry Sykes and HSBC

Centrepieces at Symphony Hall

- **Sensual Debussy:** Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla conducts the **CBSO Youth Chorus** and **Birmingham University Singers** in Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. The programme also includes Debussy's *Trois chansons de Charles d'Orléans*, *La damoiselle élue* and *Nocturnes*, along with Szymanowski's *Love songs of Hafiz* and Wagner's *Prelude and Liebestod* from *Tristan and Isolde*. (17 March, 7pm)
- **Debussy: Children's Corner:** Gražinytė-Tyla conducts a family matinee suitable for ages 5-11, presented by **Catherine Arlidge MBE**. Pieces include Debussy's *Children's Corner* and *La Boite à joujoux (The Toy Box)*. (18 March, 2pm)



- **Debussy's Legacy:** An exploration by **Birmingham Contemporary Music Group** of how Debussy's influence resonates in the music of two seminal 20th century composers, Pierre Boulez and Tristan Murail. (*18 March, 4pm.*) This concert will also be recorded for broadcast on BBC Radio 3's *Hear and Now* on 24 March.
- **Modern Debussy:** Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla directs a programme featuring music spanning a century, including Stravinsky's homage to Debussy *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, the world premiere of Takemitsu's *Green*, Debussy's *Jeux* and a chamber version of his *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. (*18 March, 6pm*)
- **Sacred Debussy:** Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla conducts the **CBSO Chorus** in a programme which features Debussy's *La cathédrale engloutie*, *Danse sacrée et danse profane* and *Le Martyre de saint Sébastien*. Messiaen's *O Sacrum Convivium* and *Dieu parmi nous* are also performed, along with Bach's organ solo *Toccatina and Fugue in D minor*, performed by soloist Julian Wilkins. (*24 March, 7pm*) This concert will also be recorded for broadcast on the BBC's *Radio 3 In Concert* on 26 March.
- **Exotic Debussy:** Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla conducts a matinee performance which explores Debussy's appreciation of music from other cultures. Opening with Debussy's *Préludes*, the programme includes extracts from Britten's *The Prince of the Pagodas*, the third movement of Ravel's *Mother Goose: Suite* and Debussy's Spanish-influenced *Images*, performed by the **CBSO Youth Orchestra**. (*25 March, 1.30pm*)
- **Tombeau de Debussy:** Reflections on Debussy from the 20th and 21st Centuries, presented by **Birmingham Contemporary Music Group**. In 1918, in the wake of his death, ten leading composers put pencil to paper for a moving homage to Debussy, and this concert features five tributes from *Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy* by Goossens, Dukas, Satie, Bartók and Ravel. Interwoven with these works is the world premiere of four special BCMG Sound Investment-commissioned works by international composers including Britain's **Julian Anderson**, and making their BCMG debuts, Korean composer **Jung-eun Park**, France's **Frédéric Pattar** and Indonesian / Dutch composer **Sinta Wullur**. The new works, like those written at the time of Debussy's death, offer personal reflections on differing aspects of Debussy's work and life. (*25 March, 4pm*)
- **Natural Debussy:** Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla conducts the festival finale, focused on the influence of nature on Debussy's imagination. Debussy's *Syrinx*, *Printemps* and *La mer* are performed alongside George Benjamin's *Ringed by the Flat Horizon*. (*25 March, 6pm*)

Chamber music at CBSO Centre

- **Debussy and Imagery:** Royal Birmingham Conservatoire musicians perform an exploration of Debussy's use of imagery through two intricate works for the piano; *Images book I* and *Images book II*, alongside his *Proses Lyriques* for soprano and piano. (*16 March, 8pm*)
- **Debussy By Night:** A late-night concert by **Conservatoire musicians** with themes of the evening and night. The programme includes Debussy's famous *Clair de Lune*, **both as a solo piano piece and in two different song settings**, and his *Nocturne* for the piano (*16 March, 9.30pm*)
- **Passionate Debussy:** CBSO musicians led by CBSO Section Leader Flute Marie-Christine Zupancic present a matinee performance of Debussy's most passionate works; *Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp*, his *String Quartet*, and *Chansons de Bilitis*, which sets the erotic poems of



Debussy's friend Pierre Louÿs to music and female voice, narrated by the University of Birmingham's Professor Helen Abbott (17 March, 1pm)

- **Enchanting Debussy:** CBSO musicians perform a programme of baroque-inspired works composed by Debussy during his final illness, rediscovering a lost domain of enchantment and beauty amidst the darkest hours of the First World War. Here the composer's *Cello Sonata* and *Violin Sonata* are performed alongside his *Piano Trio*, which he composed during his teenage years in Russia (25 March, 11.30am)

Concerts and lectures at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Recital Hall

- **Debussy and Water:** Royal Birmingham Conservatoire musicians explore the rich vein of repertoire inspired by this theme; piano piece *L'isle Joyeuse*, *Preludes* and *Le Jet d'Eau* from the Baudelaire songs. (17 March, 3.30pm)
- **Debussy, Watteau and The Fêtes Galantes:** A lecture from music professor Richard Langham Smith developing connections with paintings and poetry, illustrated with a performance of characterful songs with Verlaine settings amongst others. Free entry, booking essential (18 March, 11am)
- **Debussy the Miniaturist:** Conservatoire musicians present an entertaining programme based on different meditations on the word miniature, featuring some early and very short Debussy songs, including a recently resurrected teenage piece, *Jeanne*. Saint-Saëns studies for the left hand, and five-finger studies such as Debussy's own *Pour les cinq doigts* and Ravel's *Noël des Jouets* (24 March, 11am)
- **Debussy In Spain:** An exploration of Spanish-inflected French music **performed by Conservatoire musicians**. The programme features Debussy's *Estampes for solo piano* and *La Puerto del Vino*, a Prelude inspired by a postcard from **Manuel** de Falla, (24 March, 2pm)

Recital at Town Hall Birmingham

- Franco-Nigerian soprano **Omo Bello** performs an all-French recital entitled *La Belle Époque*, centred on songs by Debussy (23 March, 7.30pm)

Screening at The Electric Cinema

- **The Debussy Film: Impressions of a French Composer.** A special screening of Ken Russell's 1965 'film within a film', co-written by Melvyn Bragg, about a director who wants to make a movie about Claude Debussy, played by Oliver Reed. (22 March 6.30pm)

Talk at the Ikon Gallery

- **Debussy In His Own Words:** Music critic and writer Paul Griffiths OBE introduces an anthology of Debussy's articles, interviews and letters. Free entry, booking essential (24 March, 4pm)

Debussy Pianoathon at Birmingham New Street Station 16 and 17 March

During the first weekend of the festival, the CBSO will be bringing a Debussy 'Pianoathon' to New Street Station's concourse. A Grand Piano will be placed between the departure boards for the general public to play and enjoy the music of Claude Debussy. The aim is to fill the station with almost-round the clock



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Symphony Orchestra

piano playing, paying homage to Debussy. The CBSO are offering 15-minute performance slots over the weekend for pianists across the city and beyond. To take part go to: cbsoco.uk/debussy-festival-pianoathon and free slots will also be available for the general public on the day.

BBC Radio 3 at the Debussy Festival

BBC Radio 3 will broadcast concerts and a special *In Tune* from the festival, as part of its commemorations to mark the centenary of Debussy's death. *In Tune* will launch the commemorations on 23 March with a special programme from Birmingham, presented by Katie Derham. The programme will feature an interview with Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, and performances by artists taking part in the Debussy festival, including musicians from the CBSO, BCMG, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and soprano Omo Bello. Two centrepiece concerts at Symphony Hall will be recorded for broadcast; *Debussy's Legacy* (BCMG, 18 March) will be broadcast on *Hear and Now* on 24 March, and *Sacred Debussy* (CBSO / Gražinytė-Tyla, 24 March) will be broadcast on *Radio 3 In Concert* on 26 March.

Further ahead

As a coda to the Debussy Festival, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla will also conduct the CBSO's first-ever performance of Debussy's only completed opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* in a concert setting on **23 June 2018** at Symphony Hall, with an outstanding international cast featuring **Jacques Imbrailo, Katja Stuber, Laurent Naouri, Matthew Best** and **Dame Felicity Palmer**.

For further press information please contact

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LISTINGS

WEEKEND 1: 16 - 18 MARCH	WEEKEND 2: 22 - 25 MARCH
<p>Friday 16 March 3.00pm – 8.00pm Saturday 17 March 9.00am – 8.00pm Birmingham New Street Station concourse</p> <p><u>Debussy Pianoathon</u></p> <p>Apply at: cbsoco.uk/debussy-festival-pianoathon</p> <p>+ Free slots available to the general public</p>	<p>Thursday 22 March, 6.30pm The Electric Cinema, Station St, Birmingham</p> <p><u>Impressions of a French Composer (1965)</u> Director - Ken Russell Starring - Oliver Reed</p> <p>+ Post-screening talk by John Hill, Professor of Media, Royal Holloway University of London</p>



<p>Friday 16 March, 8.00pm CBSO Centre, Berkley St, Birmingham</p> <p><u>Debussy and Imagery</u> Royal Birmingham Conservatoire musicians</p> <p>Debussy <i>Images book I</i> Debussy <i>Images book II</i> Debussy <i>Proses Lyriques</i></p>	<p>Friday 23 March, 7.30pm Town Hall Birmingham</p> <p><u>Omo Bello - La Belle Époque</u> Omo Bello – Soprano Jeff Cohen – Piano</p> <p>Songs by Debussy, Massenet, Fauré and Satie</p>
<p>Friday 16 March, 9.30pm CBSO Centre, Berkley St, Birmingham</p> <p><u>Debussy by Night</u> Royal Birmingham Conservatoire musicians</p> <p>Debussy <i>Nocturne</i> for piano Debussy <i>Clair de Lune</i> (for solo piano) Debussy <i>Clair de Lune</i> (two song settings) Debussy <i>Proses Lyriques</i></p>	<p>Saturday 24 March, 11.00am Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Recital Hall</p> <p><u>Debussy the Miniaturist</u> Royal Birmingham Conservatoire musicians</p> <p>Debussy <i>Pour les cinq doigts</i> Debussy <i>Jeanne</i> Ravel <i>Noël des Jouets</i>. Debussy early and short songs</p>
<p>Saturday 17 March, 1.00pm CBSO Centre, Berkley St, Birmingham</p> <p><u>Passionate Debussy</u> CBSO musicians *Professor Helen Abbott - Narrator</p> <p>Debussy <i>Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp</i> Debussy <i>Chansons de Bilitis</i> * Debussy <i>String Quartet</i></p>	<p>Saturday 24 March, 2.00pm Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Recital Hall</p> <p><u>Debussy in Spain</u> Royal Birmingham Conservatoire musicians</p> <p>Programme includes: Debussy <i>Estampes for solo piano</i> Debussy <i>La Puerto del Vino</i></p>
<p>Saturday 17 March, 3.30pm Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Recital Hall</p> <p><u>Debussy and Water</u> Royal Birmingham Conservatoire musicians</p> <p>Debussy <i>L'isle Joyeuse</i> Debussy <i>Preludes</i> Debussy <i>Le Jet d'Eau</i></p>	<p>Saturday 24 March, 4.30pm Ikon Gallery, Brindleyplace, Birmingham</p> <p><u>Debussy in His Own Words</u> Paul Griffiths OBE</p> <p>An anthology of Debussy's articles, interviews and letters,</p> <p>FREE ADMISSION Booking essential ikon-gallery.org/event/debussy-in-his-own-words/</p>
<p>Saturday 17 March 2018, 7.00pm Symphony Hall, Birmingham</p> <p><u>Sensual Debussy</u> Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Conductor CBSO Youth Chorus Birmingham University Singers City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra</p> <p>Debussy <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i></p>	<p>Saturday 24 March 2018, 7.00pm Symphony Hall, Birmingham</p> <p><u>Sacred Debussy</u> Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Conductor CBSO Chorus City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Julian Wilkins, Organ</p>



<p>Debussy <i>Trois chansons de Charles d'Orléans</i> Szymanowski <i>Love songs of Hafiz Nos.5, 7 & 8</i> Debussy <i>La damoiselle élue</i> Debussy <i>Nocturnes</i> Wagner <i>Prelude and Liebestod from Tristan and Isolde</i></p>	<p>Debussy (orch. Matthews) <i>La cathédrale engloutie</i> Bach <i>Toccatà and Fugue in D minor</i> Messiaen <i>O Sacrum Convivium</i> Messiaen <i>Dieu parmi nous</i> Debussy <i>Danse sacrée et danse profane</i> Debussy <i>Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien</i></p>
<p>Sunday 18 March, 11.00am Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Recital Hall</p> <p><u>Debussy, Watteau and The Fêtes Galantes</u> Richard Langham Smith</p> <p>A talk developing connections with paintings and poetry, with a performance of characterful songs with Verlaine settings amongst others</p> <p>FREE ADMISSION Booking essential bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/events</p>	<p>Sunday 25 March, 11.30am CBSO Centre, Berkley St, Birmingham</p> <p><u>Enchanting Debussy</u> CBSO musicians</p> <p>Debussy <i>Cello Sonata</i> Debussy <i>Violin Sonata</i> Debussy <i>Piano Trio</i></p>
<p>Sunday 18 March 2018, 2.00pm Symphony Hall, Birmingham</p> <p><u>Debussy: Children's Corner (family concert)</u> Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Conductor Catherine Arlidge, Presenter City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra</p> <p>Debussy (orch. Abrahamsen) <i>Children's Corner</i> Debussy <i>La Boite à joujoux (The Toy Box)</i></p>	<p>Sunday 25 March 2018, 1.30pm Symphony Hall, Birmingham</p> <p><u>Exotic Debussy</u> Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Conductor City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra CBSO Youth Orchestra (* only)</p> <p>Debussy (orch. Matthews) <i>Préludes</i> Britten <i>The Prince of the Pagodas (extracts)</i> Ravel <i>Mother Goose: Suite – Third Movement</i> Debussy <i>Images* (played by CBSO Youth Orchestra)</i></p>
<p>Sunday 18 March 2018, 4.00pm Symphony Hall, Birmingham</p> <p><u>Debussy's Legacy</u> Birmingham Contemporary Music Group</p> <p>Boulez <i>Dérive I</i> Tristan Murail <i>Treize couleurs du soleil couchant</i> Tristan Murail <i>Feuilles à travers les cloches</i> Tristan Murail <i>Couleur de mer</i></p>	<p>Sunday 25 March 2018, 4.00pm Symphony Hall, Birmingham</p> <p><u>Tombeau de Debussy</u> Birmingham Contemporary Music Group **denotes World Premiere</p> <p>Jung-eun Park <i>Tombeau de Claude Debussy**</i> Dukas <i>La plainte au loin du faune</i> Bartók <i>7th movement from Improvisation on Hungarian Peasant Songs Op.20</i> Satie <i>Elegie</i> Sinita Wullur <i>Tagore's Fireflies**</i> Ravel <i>1st movement from Sonata for violin and cello</i> Frédéric Pattar <i>...de qui parlez-vous?*</i> Goossens <i>Hommage à Debussy, Op.28</i> Julian Anderson <i>Tombeau**</i></p>



City of Birmingham
Symphony Orchestra

<p>Sunday 18 March 2018, 6.00pm Symphony Hall, Birmingham</p> <p>Modern Debussy Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Conductor City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra</p> <p>Debussy <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i> (chamber version) Stravinsky <i>Symphonies of Wind Instruments</i> Takemitsu <i>Green</i> WORLD PREMIERE Debussy <i>Jeux</i></p>	<p>Sunday 25 March 2018, 6.00pm Symphony Hall, Birmingham</p> <p>Natural Debussy Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Conductor City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra</p> <p>Debussy <i>Syrinx</i> Debussy <i>Printemps</i> George Benjamin <i>Ringed by the Flat Horizon</i> Debussy <i>La mer</i></p>
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Notes to Editors

About the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO)

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is one of the world's great orchestras, and the flagship of musical life in Birmingham and the Midlands.

Based at Birmingham's spectacular Symphony Hall, the orchestra and its ensembles give over 150 concerts each year in the UK and worldwide, playing a wide range of music including everything from Wagner operas to world premieres, film music and family concerts. With a far-reaching education and community programme, four choruses and a Youth Orchestra, it is involved with every aspect of music-making in the Midlands. But at its heart is a team of 90 superb professional musicians, and a 97-year tradition of making the world's greatest music.

The orchestra was founded by future Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in 1920, and Elgar conducted its inaugural concert. But it was when it discovered the young British conductor Simon Rattle in 1980 that the CBSO became internationally famous, and showed how the arts can help give a new sense of direction to a whole city. Rattle's successors Sakari Oramo and Andris Nelsons cemented that global reputation, and continued to build on the CBSO's distinguished tradition as one of the UK's leading musical ambassadors.

Under the artistic leadership of Osborn Music Director* Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla the CBSO will continue to do what it does best – playing great music for people in Birmingham and beyond. As it approaches its centenary in 2020, the CBSO remains one of the most vibrant cultural organisations in the UK.

*The position of Music Director is generously supported by John Osborn.

BBC Radio 3

Since its launch in 1946, BBC Radio 3 – formerly the Third Programme, has been a bold pioneer in the cultural world. It is one of the world's foremost presenters, creators, commissioners and curators across classical, folk, world, jazz and contemporary music as well as drama, philosophy and ideas. The station is also the most significant commissioner of new and contemporary music in the UK, with 35 new works commissioned annually and broadcasts over 600 concerts a year, including live broadcasts from the greatest classical music festival in the world (BBC Proms). Radio 3's In Concert programme alone reaches the equivalent of 250 packed concert halls a week, and the BBC Orchestras and Choirs give around 400 concerts a year in over 60 UK locations. The station has always nurtured extraordinary artistic talents, provided a platform for important scientific and political debates/announcements, and broadcast ground-breaking experimental drama – always while delivering its core aim of connecting audiences with pioneering music and culture.