

PRESS RELEASE
20 December 2018

Steven Isserlis receives three prestigious awards as he marks his 60th Birthday

Internationally renowned British cellist Steven Isserlis marked his 60th birthday yesterday. The week began with a special celebration at Wigmore Hall, featuring a concert in which Isserlis was joined by a group of his closest musical friends **Radu Lupu** (in a rare guest appearance), **Sir András Schiff**, **Connie Shih**, **Ferenc Rados**, **Joshua Bell**, and **Sir Simon Keenlyside**, both performing with and for him. Isserlis also performed the world premiere of *For Steven Isserlis 60*, composed especially for him by **Márta and György Kurtág**. The concert was preceded with favourite literary readings by actor **Gabriel Woolf**.

In the run-up to his milestone birthday, Isserlis has also received three prestigious awards both in the UK and from international organisations. This week, Isserlis received **The Maestro Foundation Genius Grant**, awarded by Santa Monica-based The Maestro Foundation. The foundation nurtures young classical musicians and encourages the appreciation of classical music works. Isserlis is a dedicated educator, and the grant has been awarded in recognition of this. He has hugely enjoyed giving many recitals for the Foundation, and becoming close friends with the founders, Aaron Mendelsohn and Marcia Adelstein.

On 1st December, at a recital with pianist Alasdair Beatson at St Hilda's College Oxford's Jacqueline du Pré Music Building, Isserlis was presented with the **Honorary Fellowship of St Hilda's College Oxford**. The Fellowship has been awarded in recognition of Isserlis's many years of artistic support to the College, he has been Patron of the Jaqueline du Pré since 1998 and returns annually to sell-out audiences, with this year's concert featured works by Bach, Beethoven, Fauré and Schumann.

Earlier in the season, on 10 October Isserlis was awarded with the **Gold Medal and Certificate of Merit** by the **Armenian Ministry of Culture**, following a performance of Dvořák's *Cello Concerto* with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra and Eduard Topchjan in Yerevan. This is the Ministry's highest accolade and was awarded to Isserlis for 'strengthening cultural ties between Armenia and the UK, for mutually beneficial long-term collaborations, and the development of educational endeavours'. Isserlis has been a regular visiting performer to Armenia, having first performed in Yerevan during the Soviet era, in 1984.

Steven Isserlis comments: *"All three of these extremely varied awards have thrilled me, because they are all given by institutions with aims that are close to my heart. They almost compensate for my reaching the advanced age of 60..."*

Also in this birthday month, BBC Radio 3's *Record Review* selected Isserlis's recent disc **Chopin: Cello Sonata; Schubert: Arpeggione Sonata** with pianist **Dénes Várjon** as one of 2018's best classical

releases, with Jeremy Samms commenting: “*What Isserlis brings most of all is his singing, he’s the best singer on the cello you could ever, ever find.*” Isserlis also performed his debut with the **Orpheus Chamber Orchestra** in New York, with Broadway World writing: *To say Mr Isserlis stirred his audience’s emotions is the understatement of the year. Rapture, elation, bliss, momentary sorrow...and back to delight all passed through him to his cello to the audience.*

Other recent awards and nominations

Isserlis’s critically-acclaimed recording of the CPE Bach and Haydn *Cello Concertos* was nominated in the Best Classical Instrumental Solo category for the 2018 **Grammy Awards** in the US, and shortlisted in the Concerto category for the **Gramophone Music Awards 2018** in the UK. The disc won the **Limelight Magazine Award** in Australia for Orchestral Disc of the Year, and Isserlis has also been nominated for International Artist in its **Limelight Artists of the Year Awards 2018**, the winner to be announced on 3 January 2019. Isserlis was also presented with the prestigious **Glashütte Award** at 2017’s Dresden Festival.

Shostakovich & Kabalevsky Cello Sonatas album – released 1 February

On **1 February 2019** Isserlis and pianist **Olli Mustonen** release ***Shostakovich & Kabalevsky Cello Sonatas*** on Hyperion. The album also features Prokofiev’s *Pallade*. These three twentieth century Russian composers were near-contemporaries who shared the experience of living through the most repressive years of Stalinism. Their musical styles are very different; but they share a gift for powerful communication, and for expressing extremes of emotion throughout their music. The disc features Shostakovich’s *Cello Sonata* (the only standard work on the disc), Prokofiev’s early *Ballade*, and four rarities: Shostakovich’s *Moderato*, Prokofiev’s *Adagio* from *Cinderella*, and Kabalevsky’s little-known *Rondo in Memory of Prokofiev*, as well as his magnificent *Sonata, op 71*.

Forthcoming concert highlights

Isserlis continues a major exploration of the chamber works of Schumann and Fauré at Wigmore Hall with special guests, and continues as Artist in Residence with **Kammerakademie Potsdam**. Isserlis is joined by regular collaborator **Robert Levin** (on fortepiano) to perform the complete cycle of Beethoven’s music for cello and piano, and Isserlis presents a specially-devised new programme *Composers and their Muses* alongside another regular collaborator **Connie Shih**, featuring works by three pairs of composers who inspired each other. Isserlis also directs the **Lucerne Symphony Orchestra** in Mozart’s *Piano Concerto No 23* with **Radu Lupu** as soloist, and undertakes a trio tour in the US with his longtime friends and collaborators **Joshua Bell** and **Jeremy Denk**.

Guest soloist performances in 2019 include Schumann’s *Cello Concerto* with the **BBC Symphony Orchestra** and **Sakari Oramo**, and also with the **City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra** and **Nikolaj Znaider**, and Saint-Saens and Schumann’s *Cello Concertos* with the **Budapest Symphony Orchestra** and **András Keller**. Isserlis also makes his debut with the **Dresden Staatskapelle**.

Full details can be found in Steven Isserlis’s season press release [here](#)

Images can be found here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ujq0voyu2enmb1d/AAANMG4zX3dl0dsrjHtEFi-Pa?dl=0>

Concert dates and biography can be found at www.stevenisserlis.com

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