



PRESS RELEASE

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BBC National Orchestra & Chorus of Wales announces their 2017-2018 season

Highlights from the season include:

- BBC NOW celebrates its 90th anniversary in April 2018 and is joined by some of its closest friends for celebratory concerts throughout the season
- Principal Conductor Thomas Søndergård presents seven concerts bookended with Shostakovich symphonies
- Principal Guest Conductor Xian Zhang begins a complete Beethoven Symphony cycle performed over two seasons around Wales
- Composer-in-Association Huw Watkins presents a new commission, and curates two concerts featuring music that has shaped him
- Conductor Laureate Tadaaki Otaka celebrates 30 years with the Orchestra and his 70th birthday with two concerts in December
- A showcase of works that have been commissioned for BBC NOW, alongside two new commissions
- Russia 17: BBC NOW joins arts organisations across Wales for a season marking the centenary of the Russian Revolution, including a collaboration with National Dance Company Wales

BBC National Orchestra & Chorus of Wales (BBC NOW) today announce their 2017-2018 season, with a celebration of the **Orchestra's 90th anniversary** in April. For almost 90 years, BBC NOW has played an integral role in the cultural and classical landscape of Wales, performing to audiences across the UK, abroad and on air. The Orchestra is joined by some of its closest friends for performances throughout the season to celebrate its birthday.

Principal Guest Conductor **Xian Zhang** begins a cycle of Beethoven Symphonies which culminates next season; Conductor Laureate **Tadaaki Otaka** celebrates 30 years with the Orchestra and his 70th birthday with two concerts in December; and Principal Conductor **Thomas Søndergård** bookends the season with Shostakovich symphonies (No. 12 and No. 5). Composer-in-Association **Huw Watkins** curates two concerts exploring the music that shaped him, as both a composer and performer; and the Orchestra look back at some of the works that have been commissioned for them over the years.

Principal Conductor Thomas Søndergård

BBC NOW celebrates a key moment in the Orchestra's history, revisiting the symphony Principal Conductor **Thomas Søndergård** performed in his first concert in post with BBC NOW. Sibelius' fifth symphony, a celebratory piece written for Sibelius' 50th birthday, is performed at **St David's Hall [8 February]**, **Brangwyn Hall [9 February]** and **Cheltenham Town Hall [11 February]**. In

this concert, Principal Flute **Matthew Featherstone** moves into the spotlight for Nielsen's *Flute Concerto*.

Søndergård gives two performances of Brahms first symphony, at **Cheltenham Town Hall [8 March]** and **Brangwyn Hall [9 March]**, where the Orchestra are joined by pianist **Stephen Hough** for Mendelssohn's Italianate *Piano Concerto No. 1* and the programme also includes Dvořák's *The Golden Spinning Wheel*.

Opening the new season with *Shostakovich 12* at **St David's Hall [12 October]**, Søndergård returns to close the Cardiff season with the fifth symphony at **St David's Hall [7 June]**, alongside **Baiba Skride's** performance of one of the most technically difficult works for the violin: Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto*.

Principal Guest Conductor Xian Zhang

Following her inaugural season in 2016-2017, Principal Guest Conductor **Xian Zhang** returns to conduct six concerts across the season including the start of a complete cycle of Beethoven symphonies which culminates next season. Zhang gives her first concert of the season at **St David's Hall [10 November]** with a programme of Verdi and Respighi. Following seven years as Music Director at Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi, Zhang presents music from some of Verdi's most celebrated operas including *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata*, performed by Italian mezzo soprano **Chiara Taigi**. The concert closes with a celebration of ancient Rome in Respighi's *Pini di Roma*.

Xian Zhang's Beethoven symphony cycle will be spread over two tours around Wales, in November with Beethoven's symphonies No's 2, 4, 6 and 7 across three concert dates at **Aberystwyth Arts Centre [16 November]**, **Prichard Jones Hall, Bangor [17 November]** and **Venue Cymru, Llandudno [19 November]**. Zhang leads a performance of Beethoven's daring and outlandish Ninth symphony at **St David's Hall [19 January]** and **Brangwyn Hall [20 January]**, alongside a new work from Composer-in-Association **Huw Watkins** commissioned by BBC Radio 3. The Orchestra is joined by mezzo-soprano **Clara Mouriz**, tenor **Allan Clayton** and bass **Matthew Rose** with **BBC National Chorus of Wales**.

Composer-in-Association Huw Watkins

Watkins curates two concerts at **BBC Hoddinott Hall** this season, exploring the music that shaped him both as a composer and a performer. Conducted by **Martyn Brabbins [12 January]**, Huw joins the Orchestra to perform Britten's *Piano Concerto* alongside Tippett's *Suite for the Birthday of Prince Charles*; two composers who have strongly influenced Watkins's compositional style, concluding with Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*. On **31 January**, the Orchestra is directed by composer and conductor **Ryan Wigglesworth** for a programme of music by living composers selected by Huw, including John Woolrich's *Oboe concerto* which is performed by **Nick Daniel**.

As part of the 90th anniversary celebrations at **BBC Hoddinott Hall**, the Orchestra looks back at works that have been commissioned for BBC NOW over the years. The two concerts **[21 February and 28 March]**, which will each feature a new commission, will also include music by former Composers-in-Association, Michael Berkeley, Simon Holt and B Tommy Andersson, and former Composers-in-Residence, Guto Puw and Mark Bowden.

Tadaaki Otaka marks 30 years with BBC NOW

Conductor Laureate **Tadaaki Otaka** marks 30 years with the Orchestra this season, as well as celebrating his 70th birthday in two Elgar focused concerts in December. For the first concert, at **St David's Hall [7 December]**, the centrepiece is Elgar's *Cello Concerto* given by **Steven Isserlis**. The programme also features Takemitsu's luminous poem, *Twilight*, and Rachmaninov's second symphony.

Otaka returns to conduct an all-Elgar programme with soloist mezzo-soprano **Catherine Wyn-Rogers** at **BBC Hoddinott Hall [11 December]**. The concert opens with *Cockaigne* and *Sea Pictures*. The programme also includes the composer's *Serenade for Strings* and *In the South*.

Russia 17

BBC NOW joins forces with arts organisations across Wales for Russia 17, a series marking the centenary of the 1917 Russian Revolution. The events capture the social and cultural explosion of the era and explore Wales' connections with Russia. At **St David's Hall [12 October]**, Mosolov's dramatic ballet score, *Iron Foundry*, gives life to fearsome machines and the indomitable spirit of the workers of the Russian Revolution. Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 12 (The Year 1917)* follows suit with an unusually patriotic depiction of Lenin's life, commissioned by the party to honour the revolution and **Igor Levit** joins BBC NOW and Principal Conductor **Thomas Søndergård** for Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 5 (Emperor)*.

BBC NOW performs Shostakovich's symphonic poem *October*, at **BBC Hoddinott Hall [20 October]** which was commissioned to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution. A work that is at once both patriotic and subversive, in which Shostakovich quotes material from works composed whilst he was condemned by the party. In a programme of symphonic poems also including music by Liszt, Mussorgsky and Scriabin, baritone and BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist **Ashley Riches** joins the orchestra with conductor **Robert Sparno**.

The Orchestra collaborates with the **National Dance Company Wales** for a performance of *P.A.R.A.D.E* at **Wales Millennium Centre [24 & 25 October]** and **Pontio, Bangor [28 & 29 October]**. Erik Satie's pioneering score for a reimagined version of the Ballets Russes' *Parade* features a typewriter, foghorn and mop! In a performance that begins with outdoor artistry before the audience is taken through to the stage; dancers, musicians, artists and a renegade aerial robot unite for a revolutionary dance experience.

Other highlights

The Orchestra is joined by trombone player, the youngest ever winner of the BBC Young Musician Competition and BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist, **Peter Moore** with conductor **Kazuki Yamada** in a programme exploring the theme of nature **[29 September]**. Featuring Franck's *Ce qu'on entend a la montagne*, Takemitsu's *Fantasma Cantos II*, Milhaud's *Concerto d'hiver*, d'Indy's *Jour d'ete a la montagne* and Honegger's *Pastorale d'ete*.

The Orchestra are conducted by **Otto Tausk** and joined by BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist, soprano **Fatma Said [3 November]** for a programme including Smetana's *Vltava*, the second of six tone poems written by the composer in homage to his homeland, Liszt's *Hungari*, Janacek's *The Danube* and *Song to the Moon*, the most popular excerpt from Dvořák's *Rusalka*. The programme also features four songs by Strauss: *Zueignung*; *Allerseelen*; *Morgen* and *Cäcilie*.

The Orchestra and Chorus are joined by award-winning singer, and BBC Radio 2 presenter, **Clare Teal** and conductor **Gavin Sutherland**, for Christmas Celebrations at the **Brangwyn Hall, Swansea [14 December]** and **St David's Hall, Cardiff [15 December]** with a programme of festive favourites and jazz classics.

BBC NOW welcomes back former Principal Guest Conductors **Jac van Steen** and **Joseph Swensen** as part of the celebrations. Debussy's *La Mer* forms the centrepiece at **St David's Hall [23 March]** conducted by **Jac van Steen** with **Women of BBC National Chorus of Wales** and **Steven Osborne** joins the orchestra for a performance of Mozart's last Piano Concerto - No. 27. **Joseph Swensen** leads the Orchestra in a Bach focused programme at the **Brangwyn Hall, Swansea [4 May]** featuring **Mahan Esfahani's** arrangement of *Concerto for keyboard in D minor* performed by the pianist himself, Bach's *Toccat & Fugue in D minor* and Bruckner's *Symphony No. 7*.

BBC NOW presents Bernstein's glittering music for the stage at **Brangwyn Hall, Swansea [15 June]**, joining the celebrations for the composer's centenary, with clarinettist **Annelien Van Wauwe** led by **Eric Stern**.

Full listings available online: bbc.co.uk/now

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Notes to Editors

BBC National Orchestra of Wales

BBC NOW is one of the UK's most versatile orchestras, with a varied range of work as both a broadcast orchestra and national symphony orchestra of Wales. The orchestra's adventurous programming is driven by Principal Conductor Thomas Søndergård, Principal Guest Conductor Xian Zhang and Conductor Laureate Tadaaki Otaka; the Welsh composer Huw Watkins is the orchestra's composer-in-association.

Generously supported by the Arts Council of Wales, and part of BBC Wales, BBC NOW is orchestra-in-residence at Cardiff's St David's Hall, and performs a busy series of live concerts throughout Wales and the UK, with almost all of its performances heard on BBC Radio. BBC NOW appears biennially at BBC Cardiff Singer of the World and annually at the BBC Proms. Autumn 2015 saw one of the orchestra's most ambitious international tours to-date; a community residency celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Welsh settlement in Patagonia, followed by performances across South America.

Each year, BBC NOW delivers an extensive learning programme of workshops and concerts working with thousands of people in schools, special schools, and community groups across Wales; building skills in performance, composition and conducting.

The orchestra's home is BBC Hoddinott Hall, a world-class concert hall and recording studio based in Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff Bay. From here BBC NOW continues its work as the UK's foremost soundtrack orchestra working on programmes and films including War and Peace, David Attenborough's Life Story and Louis Theroux's My Scientology Movie. As the Doctor Who house band, the Orchestra have performed music for the series for the last twelve years, and performed in arenas around the UK for the Doctor Who Symphonic Spectacular tour.

BBC Orchestras and Choirs

The BBC's Orchestras and Choirs each play a unique role in British cultural life. Based in Cardiff, Glasgow, London and Salford, the BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Singers and the BBC Philharmonic, reach an audience of millions with their wide-ranging and distinctive programming. Performing with the world's leading conductors and soloists, the BBC Orchestras and Choirs give around 400 concerts a year in over 50 towns and cities across the UK as well as touring worldwide. They give around 60 premiere performances a year.

The Orchestras and Choirs organise around 200 learning and outreach projects across the country, bringing music to tens of thousands of people of all ages across the UK. They are an integral part of the BBC's Ten Pieces, an initiative designed to encourage children to get creative with classical music. They are also the backbone of the BBC Proms, collectively giving almost half of the concerts at the world's largest classical music festival.

BBC Radio 3

BBC Radio 3 broadcasts high-quality, distinctive classical music and cultural programming, alongside regular arts and ideas programmes, jazz and world music. The station features more live classical music programming than any other and is the home of the BBC Proms - broadcasting every Prom live and more than 600 complete concerts a year - alongside daily speech programming, 90 full-length operas, over 25 drama commissions and over 20 new BBC music commissions a year. Radio 3 is the most significant commissioner of new musical works in the country and is committed to supporting new talent, from composers to writers and new young performers, through schemes such as New Generation Artists and New Generation Thinkers. www.bbc.co.uk/radio3