



BBC National
Orchestra and
Chorus of Wales

Cerddorfa
a Chorws
Cenedlaethol
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PRESS RELEASE

7 August 2018

BBC National Orchestra of Wales to tour China with Principal Guest Conductor Xian Zhang 15 – 21 December 2018

BBC National Orchestra of Wales is to tour China with Chinese Principal Guest Conductor **Xian Zhang** from **15 -21 December 2018** giving five concerts in four major cities aimed at fostering creative collaborations between China and Wales.

Beginning with two concerts in **Beijing**, BBC NOW travels to **Changsha**, **Wuhan** and **Shenzhen**, performing two programmes. In the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Beijing (15 Dec), Changsha Concert Hall (18 Dec) and Qintai Concert Hall, Wuhan (19 Dec), the orchestra are joined by Chinese harpist **Shimeng Sun**, who graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music with a Master's Degree in 2018, and BBC NOW's Principal Flute **Matthew Featherstone**, for Mozart's *Flute and Harp Concerto*, performed alongside Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri Overture* and Dvořák's *Symphony No. 8*. For the second concert in Beijing (16 Dec) the orchestra welcomes another Chinese guest soloist, cellist **Jiapeng Nie**, to perform Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations*, in a programme with Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmilla Overture* & Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 5*.

The final concert of the tour in Shenzhen Concert Hall (21 Dec) will see BBC NOW perform alongside musicians from the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra. This first time collaboration between the two orchestras will provide a special opportunity for cultural exchange between musicians, and build creative links for future collaborative activity in China.

This visit marks the first time Zhang has toured her home country with a European symphony orchestra, and having completed her musical studies in China she is keen to bring musicians from both countries together through these performances.

Xian Zhang says *"It is with much pleasure that I am coming to China with BBC NOW. I conduct a number of the Chinese orchestras on a regular basis, but this is the first time I have toured China with a European Orchestra. I am very much looking forward to introducing the musicians of BBC NOW to my own country, and I think that the cultural co-operation with my musicians and the musicians in Shenzhen will be extremely interesting for us all"*.

Zhang's first season with BBC NOW culminated in a televised BBC Proms performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, anticipating the start of a two-year project devoted to the composer's complete symphonies, and the world premiere, on International Women's Day 2016, of Kate Whitley's 'Speak Out'

set to the text of the 2013 UN speech by Malala Yousafzai, broadcast on BBC Radio 3. Zhang is also Music Director of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and Conductor Emeritus of Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi.

The tour is a result from the first Welsh cultural delegation visit to China in early 2017; it is being supported by British Council in China and is the final part of *Inspiring Women in the Arts*, a year-long campaign showcasing the work of female artists to inspire young Chinese generations. During the visit Xian Zhang and members of the orchestra will share their experiences with aspiring female leaders and musicians in a series of activities in the host cities.

Michael Garvey, Director of BBC National Orchestra of Wales says: *"This tour offers a wonderful opportunity to build creative links with our partners in China, enhancing the close relationships that already exist between our two countries. I'm delighted that we will be able to work with key partners in the four cities to maximise the impact of our visit, and to provide opportunities for BBC NOW to directly engage with audiences and musicians in China."*

Nick Marchand, Director Arts China and North-East Asia, British Council says: *"The British Council is delighted to support the orchestra's tour with Xian Zhang, Chinese principal guest conductor and the first female to hold that role in a BBC Orchestra. With BBC NOW having first been part of a Welsh cultural delegation visit to China in early 2017, it is fantastic to see this UK-China cultural exchange come to fruition this year. We know it is going to be an inspiring visit, for both musicians and audience, alike."*

The tour is supported by British Council in China, Wales Arts International and the Arts Council of Wales

Performance dates in China:

15 December - National Centre for the Performing Arts, Beijing
16 December - National Centre for the Performing Arts, Beijing
18 December - Changsha Concert Hall, Changsha
19 December - Qintai Concert Hall, Wuhan
21 December - Shenzhen Concert Hall, Shenzhen

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Notes to Editors

Images available: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pvzr189vvhpyqo1/AACLJiigQeivIEt_1NSQJSeva?dl=0

Welsh and Chinese language versions of this press release are available.

BBC National Orchestra of Wales

For 90 years BBC NOW has played an integral part in the cultural landscape of Wales, occupying a distinctive role as both broadcast and national symphony orchestra. It performs a busy schedule of live concerts throughout Wales and the rest of the UK, led by its artistic team: Principal Guest Conductor Xian Zhang, Conductor Laureate Tadaaki Otaka and Composer-in-Association Huw Watkins. Part of BBC Wales and supported by the Arts Council of Wales, the Orchestra is an ambassador of Welsh music, championing contemporary composers and musicians.

Highlights of the 2018–19 season include the first complete performance of Stanford's Mass Via Victrix (1914–1918), Britten's War Requiem with Mark Wigglesworth and Berlioz's L'enfance du Christ with Sir Andrew Davis, as well as premieres of pieces by Paul Mealor and Jonathan Dove.

The Orchestra's performances can be heard regularly across the BBC, on Radio 3, Radio Wales and Radio Cymru. BBC NOW performs biennially at BBC Cardiff Singer of the World and annually at the BBC Proms. Building on its extensive work with special educational needs schools, BBC NOW performed the first ever Relaxed Prom in 2017, which won the Best Family Event at the 2018 Fantastic for Families Awards.

In December this year the Orchestra tours to China with Xian Zhang working with the British Council in China as part of their Inspiring Women in the Arts campaign. As part of its extensive South America tour in 2015 the orchestra visited the Welsh colony in Patagonia where musicians worked in schools and with the community.

The Orchestra's home is at BBC Hoddinott Hall in Cardiff Bay, where BBC NOW continues its work as one of the UK's foremost soundtrack orchestras.

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 around 60 locations across the UK as well as touring worldwide. They provide hundreds of hours of distinctive music-making for BBC Radio.

Contemporary music plays a central role in the musical life of each group, and every season includes a significant number of premieres, with many being commissioned by BBC Radio 3. 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 and which has reached over 4 million people across the UK. The BBC Orchestras and Choirs are the backbone of the BBC Proms, collectively giving almost half of the concerts at the world's largest classical music festival.