



Great artists and exceptional emerging talents define Wigmore Hall's inspirational and wide-ranging 2018/19 season, beginning today

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Baritone Florian Boesch, a regular at Wigmore Hall since the early days of his career, opens the Wigmore Hall's 2018/19 season today [8 September 2018] in recital with pianist Malcolm Martineau. They begin a vibrant year-long festival of performances by led great artists and exceptional emerging talents as part of a compelling programme of special projects, artist residencies, composer-led series and individual concerts, devised to delight existing audiences and draw newcomers to the life-enhancing experience of chamber music and song.

The Hall's Chief Executive and Artistic Director John Gilhooly directs a programme and season which includes with nearly 500 concerts across a vibrant programme of chamber music, song, piano, early music, contemporary music and jazz. The striking variety of artists and repertoire reflects the Hall's status as an international standard-bearer for the best in classical music.

The new season flows naturally from sustained investment in programme development and a corresponding increase in the size of its annual audience, which has grown to more than 200,000 people over the past decade. Wigmore Hall's drive to reach new and younger audiences continues in 2018/19, propelled by its popular £5 ticket offer to under-35s and preservation of affordable ticket prices. The venue's Live Stream initiative, launched following the creation of its new digital studio in 2015, will carry 10 online concerts, while the number of live BBC Radio 3 broadcasts is set to pass 100 by season's end.

In recent years Wigmore Hall has enhanced its reputation as a global leader in the promotion of song. Having explored the complete songs of Schubert over two seasons, the venue turns in 2018/19 to the songs of Robert Schumann. Today's recital launches the Schumann Song Series. Christiane Karg, Anne Schwanewilms, Robin Tritschler and Paula Murrihy are among the roster of singers scheduled to celebrate Schumann. The series, complemented by Elias String Quartet in Schumann's complete quartets, sets Schumann in context his contemporaries, will run until the end of the 2019/20 season.

Schumann's chamber music can be heard from fresh perspectives when Steven Isserlis, in company with Isabelle Faust, Janine Jansen and friends, leads a four-concert Fauré/Schumann Project. Steven Isserlis will also mark his 60th birthday in December in recital with Joshua Bell, Radu Lupu and Sir Andrés Schiff, an evening emblematic of Wigmore Hall's world-class programme.

Other season highlights include:

Return visits from Elina Garanča, René Pape, Thomas Adès, Ekaterina Semenchuk and Evgeny Kissin
Igor Levit explores variations by J.S. Bach, Beethoven, Frederic Rzewski and Stevenson

A Russian Song Series (with Iain Burnside) and a Ravel Song Series (with Joseph Middleton) continue Wigmore Hall's unrivalled commitment to the art of song

Artist residencies create season-long musical journeys in company with Dame Sarah Connolly, Pekka Kuusisto, Marlis Peterson and Alexander Melnikov

American Exploration: Visits to the New World series delivers compelling programme from Escher String Quartet and context for JACK Quartet's performance of complete string quartets of Elliott Carter

Focus on Sir George Benjamin, including a performance of his chamber opera *Into the Little Hill*, and Benjamin conducting Ensemble Modern in his *Palimpsest*, presented at London's Roundhouse

Vox Luminis and Ensemble Correspondances offer fresh insights into German and French Baroque repertoire with residencies as part of rich Early Music and Baroque Series

Emanuel Ax, Christian Blackshaw and Dame Emma Kirkby, Steven Isserlis and Piotr Anderszewski celebrate birthday milestones at Wigmore Hall

John Gilhooly, Chief Executive and Artistic Director of Wigmore Hall, notes: 'It has been a great joy to put this programme together. I am particularly thrilled by the scope of our focus on Schumann's songs and string quartets, and by the high number of outstanding singers and string quartets that we will hear throughout the season. There is a new generation of singers, dedicated to Lieder and art song, stepping forward now. We want our audience to discover their work and follow their careers as they develop.

Wigmore Hall has become a venue that is no longer for hire. The vast majority of concerts in our 2018/19 season have been built by us and are promoted by the Hall. That gives strength to our artistic identity and means that we can set the highest standards of quality and creativity across the season. Our audience appreciates the opportunity to hear world-class artists every day and to immerse themselves in artist residencies, themes and special projects that extend over one or more seasons. The last year has been financially the most successful ever for Wigmore Hall. We look forward to continuing that upward trend and sharing exceptional performances with the widest possible audience.'