Plymouth Symphony Orchestra

LIVE *Classical Music*

Wednesday 22nd March 2023
Plymouth Guildhall, 7.30pm

Carnival Overture
Dvořák

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini
Rachmaninov - Soloist – Ariel Lanyi

Symphony No1 'Titan'
Mahler

Conductor - Anne Kimber
Leader - Dave Adams

Kaupo Kikkas

Soloist – Ariel Lanyi

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Soloist
Ariel Lanyi

Photo: Kaupo Kikkas

In 2021 Ariel won 3rd Prize (The Roslyn Lyons Bronze Medal) at the Leeds International Piano Competition, performing Brahms Concerto No.2 with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Andrew Manze in the Finals.

In the same year he was a prize winner in the inaugural Young Classical Artists Trust (London) and Concert Artists Guild (New York) International Auditions.

Last summer Ariel made his debut at Wigmore Hall and participated in the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont, alongside renowned artists such as Mitsuko Uchida and Jonathan Biss. His recording of music by Schubert for Linn Records was also released.

Other highlights include live concerts (for release online) for the Vancouver Recital Society in Canada and the Banco de la República in Colombia. As soloist he appeared with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and performed Beethoven's Concerto No.2 at the Royal Academy of Music.

This season Ariel returns to Wigmore Hall, the Miami International Piano Festival and Marlboro Music Festival, and undertakes a solo tour of Argentina. He gives concerts in the Homburg MeisterKonzert series in Germany, the Menton Festival in France, Perth Concert Hall (broadcast by BBC Radio 3) and across the UK including the Brighton and Bath Festivals. As soloist he performs concertos by Mozart and Brahms with orchestras in Israel, Russia and the USA.

Previous highlights include recitals at the deSingel Arts Centre in Antwerp (stepping in for Till Fellner), Salle Cortot in Paris and a performance of Mozart's Concerto, K.491 with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Conductors whom he has in the past collaborated with include Yi-An Xu, Peter Whelan, and Trevor Pinnock. He regularly appears in concerts broadcast live on Israeli radio and television and on Radio France.

Born in Jerusalem in 1997, in 2021 Ariel completed his studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London with Ian Fountain, having studied with the late Hamish Milne. Prior to this, he studied at the High School and Conservatory of the Jerusalem Academy of Music, first with Lea Agmon, later with Yuval Cohen. Whilst there, he also studied violin and composition.

An avid chamber musician, Ariel has collaborated with leading members of the Berliner Philharmoniker and the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, as well as with eminent musicians such as Maria João Pires, Marina Piccinini, Charles Neidich, and Torleif Thedéen. Festival appearances include the Hvide Sande (Denmark), Ravello (Italy), Ausseer Festsommer (Austria), Bosa Antica (Sardinia) and Israel Festivals.

Ariel has received extensive tuition from eminent artists such as Robert Levin, Murray Perahia, Imogen Cooper, Leif Ove Andsnes, Steven Osborne, and the late Leon Fleisher and Ivan Moravec. Awards include 1st Prize at the 2018 Grand Prix Animato Competition in Paris and 1st Prize in the Dudley International Piano Competition, as well as a finalist award at the Rubinstein Competition.

In 2012 he released Romantic Profiles on LYTE records, an album featuring music by Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, and Janáček. Ariel is a Countess of Munster Recital Scheme Artist.

Ariel is a recipient of the Munster Trust Mark James Star Award and the Senior Award of the Hattori Foundation.

Ariel Lanyi put on a brilliant performance at the master concert in Homburg... The young star's virtuosity and sheer orchestral sonority is unbelievable.
Saarlander Zeitung / Homburg / March 2022

It came as a refreshing change to hear a pianist such as Ariel Lanyi who not only listened to himself but could make the piano speak in a way that is very rare these days.
Christopher Axworthy, The Keyboard Charitable Trust

PROGRAMME

Conductor
Anne Kimber

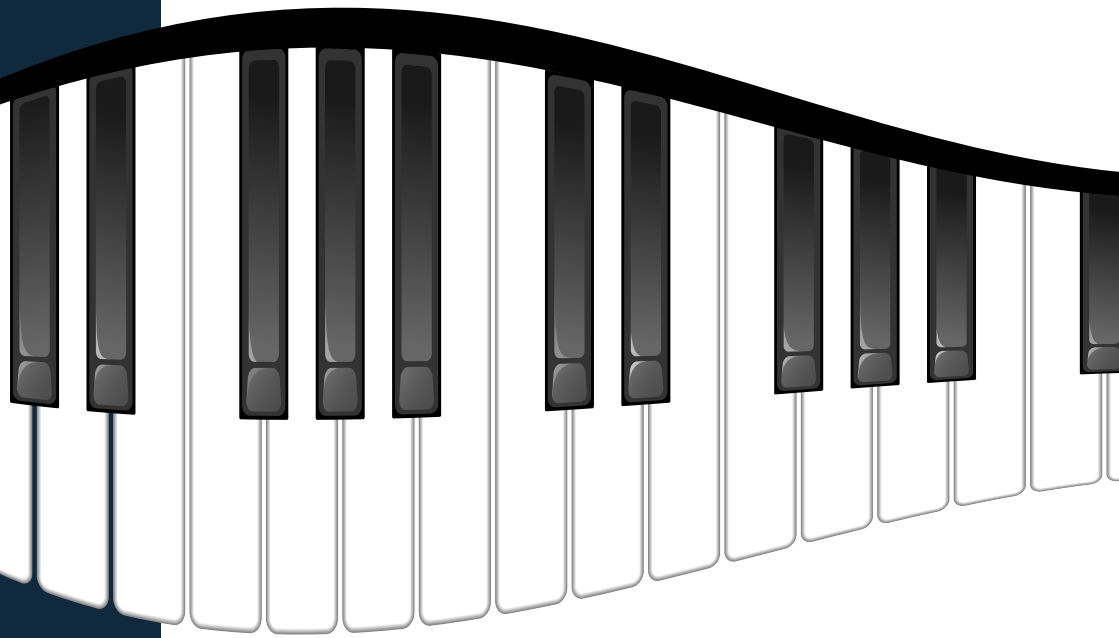
Leader
Dave Adams

Carnival Overture
Dvořák

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini
Rachmaninov **- Soloist – Ariel Lanyi**

INTERVAL

Symphony No1 'Titan'
Mahler



see plymouthsymphony.co.uk for details of next concert

Conductor
Anne Kimber

In June 2022, Anne was awarded an Honorary Master of Arts Degree, by Plymouth Marjon University, to recognise her dedication to both the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra and Dartington Festival Orchestra and also for her outstanding contribution to classical music within the region.

Anne has been connected with the PSO for many years, first as a player and subsequently as conductor (only the sixth in over 145 years of the orchestra's existence).

As a flautist her musical activities have ranged widely in the South West, performing with groups such as the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, the Birmingham Royal Ballet, Opera South West, New Devon Opera, the South West Sinfonietta and many others.

She also manages the Dartington Festival Orchestra as part of the Dartington International Summer School and has been a mentor for the renowned South West Music School.

As conductor of the PSO she has helped to draw performances of real power and vibrancy from the players, enabling it to become the most accomplished group of its kind in the South West.

Leader
Dave Adams

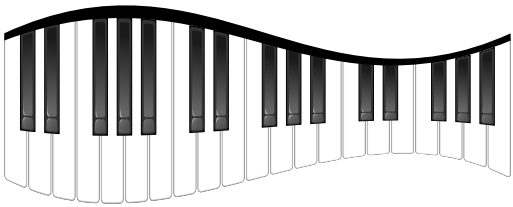
Dave Adams has been a member of PSO since he moved to Plymouth in 1992. He grew up in Salisbury where the vibrant amateur and professional music scene provided the ideal backdrop to the early days of his musical development. He started playing violin and piano at the age of 8 and was particularly inspired by his violin teacher, Daphne Moody, and Alan Harwood, head of music at his secondary school, who provided him so many opportunities to experience music of different styles - from madrigal groups and chamber music to full size oratorios and concertos.

After three years studying Physics at Bristol University, a year as a volunteer conservation officer and teacher training at Oxford University, Dave moved to Plymouth to take up a post at Devonport High School for Boys where he is now Deputy Head. Since then Dave has played violin and guitar in several orchestras and folk clubs, and can occasionally be seen playing fiddle in his son's rock band in local pubs and festivals. However, the one constant musical membership throughout this time has been the PSO. 'Playing wonderful music is just part of PSO's attraction for me – it's also given me a really close set of friends and a great social life.' When he's not making music, Dave also enjoys mountain walking and dinghy racing.

Overture, 'Carnival', Op 92
DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Dvořák planned a cycle of overtures to be performed together as a trilogy, portraying 'three great creative forces of the Universe – Nature, Life and Love'. In all three he used a basic melody describing 'the unchangeable laws of Nature'. However, he eventually abandoned the project, and in its place completed three separate concert overtures, the most famous being 'Carnival' – the middle one of the set.

The composer provided the following programme: 'A lonely, contemplative wanderer reaches the city at nightfall where a carnival of pleasures reigns supreme. On every side is heard the clangour of instruments, mingled with shouts of joy and unrestrained hilarity of the people, giving vent to their feelings in song and dances'. The form of the work is clear, but somewhat unusual. Essentially a fast movement in sonata form, it is not preceded by a slow introduction, but instead has the slow section appear in the middle of the work. The initial festive section, with its brilliant opening theme announced by the full orchestra, is followed by some episodic material, after which the harp enters and the music arrives at a moment of stillness. The slow section now begins with a dreamy melody on the cor anglais, accompanied by muted violins and violas. The faster tempo then resumes as the opening material is developed, generally more lightly-scored, with the exuberant full-orchestral sound reserved for the recapitulation of the overture's opening, with the brass taking a prominent share in the excitement of the closing section. The first performance took place in Prague, in 1892.



Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op 43
RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)

Nicolò Paganini (1782-1840) has preoccupied musicians for over two centuries. With his gaunt and emaciated figure cloaked in priestly black, he performed feats of violin sorcery, simply unthought-of until he burst upon the European concert-scene at the start of the nineteenth century. Not only were his virtuoso pyrotechnics unsurpassed, but his performance of even simple melodies was of such purity and sweetness that it moved his audiences to tears. Given all this, he was seen as almost superhuman, and perhaps this was to some degree responsible for rumours suggesting he did have special powers, indeed powers not of this earth. In fact this was largely fostered and spread by the composer himself, but did make for some fantastic PR both at the time, and subsequently.

Like most virtuoso instrumentalists of the nineteenth century, Paganini composed much of his own music. Notable among his output are the Caprices for Unaccompanied Violin, works so difficult that even today they are really accessible only to the finest exponents around. The last of the Caprices, No 24 in A minor, served as the basis for compositions by Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, and others, and was also the inspiration for Rachmaninov's 'Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini' – a series of variations on this theme, which is characterized as much by its recurrent rhythm (five short notes followed by a longer one) as by its melody. Taking his cue from the Paganini legend, Rachmaninov combined another melody with that of the demonic violinist, the 'Dies irae' (Day of Wrath) from the Requiem Mass for the Dead. This ancient chant had long been connected not only with the Roman Catholic Church service, but also with musical works containing some diabolical element, such as Berlioz's 'Witches' Sabbath' from his 'Symphonie fantastique', Liszt's 'Totentanz' (Dance of Death), Saint-Saëns's 'Danse macabre', and Rachmaninov's own earlier 'Isle of the Dead'.

The 'Rhapsody', a brilliant showpiece for virtuoso pianist, is a set of twenty-four variations, and begins, somewhat unusually in a set of variations, without any direct reference to the theme at the very start. Instead, following the briefest orchestral flourish, the 'theme'

appears first with a brief, eight-bar introduction, presenting a mere skeletal outline of the melody – reminiscent of the pizzicato opening of the finale of Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony – before the theme proper is stated by unison violins, with the piano now swapping to reinforce the melodic contours. The title 'Rhapsody' might lead listeners to expect great freedom in the treatment of Paganini's theme, but here Rachmaninov, somewhat ironically, fashions the most classically-shaped of all his compositions.

Variation 1 is conspicuous for its use of the snare-drum, after which the theme is heard on violins alone, before progressing to Variation 2, the theme passing to the piano, with various notes reinforced on horns and trumpets. Each variation is complete in itself, and has a clearly-marked, and unmistakeable link back to the original. True, the treatment as a whole becomes freer as the work progresses, but that is merely consistent with classical practice. The first six variations maintain strict tempo, stay in the same key (A minor) as did Paganini's original, and even hint at the Italian's own thematic investigations. The first major change in character comes with the seventh variation, in which Rachmaninov introduces the 'Dies irae' plainchant as a second theme, heard first in sustained chords in the piano against thematic segments in bassoon and cellos. Not long after, – Variation 10 – while the clarinets in a low register deliver an angular distortion of the theme, the piano once again intones the 'Dies irae', now in slow, spaced-out octaves. In fact, the 'Dies irae' will go on to play a substantial role in the score, perhaps as Rachmaninov seeks to allude to the allegorically 'deeper' side of Paganini's persona, with its alleged demonic overtones. Through the course of the tenth variation, the music stays firmly in Paganini's home key of A minor, formally ending the work's first section.

After a slight pause, the second section begins with Variation 11, which functions as a kind of reflective, and dreamy solo cadenza over 'tremolo' strings. Later variations give much contrast of rhythm, and tonality, with Variation 16 a rather wistful version of the theme on solo oboe, now in the remote key of B flat minor. Prolonged throughout the next variation, that key fields to the lushly romantic on of D flat major and Variation 18, the work's most famous – some might even say, infamous moment and, with the section marked 'Andante cantabile' (Slow and in a songlike manner), it's undoubtedly the emotional climax of the work, and begun by the piano alone. Simply put, Rachmaninov takes the first five notes of Paganini's theme, turns the phrase upside down, changes from minor to major, slows the tempo dramatically and introduces a suitably expansive orchestral background melody, of which there are numerous examples throughout his Four Piano Concertos. After this poignant 'heart', or 'slow movement' of the work is done and dusted, climaxes begin to subside and the music fades gently away.

'Pizzicato' strings then shatter the eminently romantic mood, in readiness for Variations 19-24, as the key returns to A minor for what is the third, and final section of the work, back in the original home key of A minor. The closing section is not without its darker, satanic moments, like the dark march that erupts in a piano cadenza, and the twenty-third variation, where the soloist begins in the unlikely key of A flat minor, but the orchestra promptly takes matters into its own hands by jerking the soloist back up a semitone to A minor.

A final climax comes when the brass thunders out the 'Dies irae' theme which seems to drag Paganini's theme down with it, as the percussion section joins in a combined orchestral exclamation. Then, just as Rachmaninov seems to be building to his mightiest climax yet, the work ends with one of the wittiest touches of all – one quiet, and cheeky final little nod from the piano in the direction of Maestro Paganini – but, hey, let's not forget Abbé Liszt's part in all this, as well.

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Dave Adams
Nathan Broomhead
Jessie Welbourne
Paul Stephenson
Heather Sadler
Rebecca Hewlins
Jo Sells
Margaret Sampson
Catherine Smith
Jonathan Stromberg
Catherine Simpson
John Ollier
Alan Thomas
Stephen Turner

Second Violins
Dawn Ashby
Sandra Sutton
Maggie Willmott
Lorna Groves
Kate Wheeler
Joan Thompson
Gill Healy
Lyndsey Pengelly
Pam Pinder
Ciaran Rickets
Jazmine Holness
Stephen Macro
Vanessa Tyler
Marion Hinks
Andy Clarkson

Violas
Petra Stephenson
Lindsay Endean
Rob Kellagher
Colin McKay
Cathy Smart
Rosalind Turner
Joan Thomas

Cellos
Susanna Campbell
Alicia Stolliday
Celina Cox
Debbie McMurran
Robert Tayler
Andrew Palmer
Kate Whyman
Jane Spence
Di McWatters
Denise Hasshill
Ian Tunbridge

Double Basses
Judy Whitlock
Andy Tunbridge
Patrick Butterley

Flutes
Michael Wood
Lucy Annetts
Siân Withington

Piccolo
Cathy Quinlan

Oboes
Carolyn Haynes
Tracy Senior

Cor Anglais
Becka McClaughry

Clarinets
Patrick Saunders
Hannah Epps

E flat Clarinet
Emily Batten

Bass Clarinet
Barry Parsons

Bassoons
Helen Simmonds
Gemma Hayes

Horns
Jaqueline Kershaw
Simon Keates
Debby Cotton
Catherine Garland
Hilary Gunn
Rachel Strange
Patrick McLaughry

Trumpets
Ben Dawson
Bruce Fox
Ivan Sidgreaves
Stuart Paul
Paul Thomas

Trombones
Andrew Oldfield
Colin Hudson
Frank Robinson

Tuba
Matthew Watkinson

Timpani
Michelle Hiley
Andy Turner

Percussion
Noelle Boucherat
Rachel Colville
Claire Brock

Harp
Gary Hawkins

Players interested in joining the PSO should contact the
Musical Director, Anne Kimber on 01803 732550

Symphony No 1 in D major, 'Titan'
MAHLER (1860-1911)

Langsam schleppend. Wie ein Naturlaut - Im Anfang sehr gemächlich

Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell

Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen

Stürmisch bewegt

Though Gustav Mahler had established his particular kind of symphony by 1900, and by then had also become director of the Vienna Opera, it was in the last years of his life and the first years of the twentieth century that he consolidated a career which was to be so influential. Doubly influential: firstly on the music of Schoenberg and other composers who directly trod his footsteps in Vienna, secondly, and at a distance, on international taste. After the Second World War the public in Britain, America and elsewhere responded strongly to the intensity and hugeness of his music. At this time too, such composers as Shostakovich and Britten – albeit outside his Austro-German culture – nevertheless acknowledged their debt to him.

Mahler wrote for the instruments of the orchestra sometimes in a traditional way, for instance in horn, and trumpet-calls, while also sometimes extraordinarily, by incorporating sleigh-bells into the Fourth Symphony, and a mandolin into the Seventh and Eighth. Mahler's harmony sometimes – in late works – screws the tension to the bursting point of the tonal system, but it can also be deliberately naïve as part of a recreation of the simple and child-like. A master of the colossal in terms of orchestration, Mahler can, like Berlioz, surprise by the sheer delicacy of his effects, as in the song-cycle with orchestral accompaniment, 'Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen' (Songs of a Wayfaring Lad), a work which also shows the connections Mahler made between song and symphony.

Mahler completed nine numbered symphonies and enough of a tenth for a completion to be attempted by others (notably by Deryck Cooke, whose version was first performed back in 1960). Additionally, he stretched a point in referring to one of Mahler's other works as a symphony – the orchestrally-accompanied 'Das Lied von der Erde' (The Song of the Earth) on German translations of Chinese poems.

In the purely orchestral symphonies (1, 5, 6, 7 and 9), and in the Fourth, which adds a soprano voice in the finale only, his symphonic form displays a clear descent from the historical Austro-German types, with scherzos and 'song-like' phrases, which may recall fellow-Austrian composer Anton Bruckner (1824-1896). In the remainder the text must influence the musical form, as it did in the finale of Beethoven's 'Choral Symphony' which was arguably, to some extent, the inspiration of such works. Within twentieth-century music, there is no series of symphonies, except those by Shostakovich, to parallel the variety and scope of Mahler's.

At its first performance, under Mahler himself at Budapest in 1889, the work appeared as a 'symphonic poem' – a descriptive or pictorial work, in five movements, with individual titles. Later distrust of such titles, too easily taken in literal detail, led the composer to present the final, revised version of the work as a four-movement symphony, without titles. The omitted movement, 'Blumine' or 'Flora', is occasionally restored by well-meaning conductors, but Mahler admitted that his stimulus for the present third movement had been a picture for children of a 'hunter's funeral' at which the burial procession is escorted by weeping animals.

No external props are in fact needed for this powerful first symphony, nor does the composer bolster it with words. His means of pushing expression to his personal extreme was the use of an outsize orchestra. For example, the proclamations of the brass require seven horns and four trumpets as well as the usual three trombones and tuba. Additionally, four flutes (two doubling piccolo), three oboes (one doubling cor anglais), four clarinets (two doubling high E flat, or

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bass clarinet), three bassoons (one doubling double bassoon), timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, tam-tam, harp and strings make up the rest of the orchestral resources.

A still, suspended note ('like a sound of nature', the composer wrote) opens the introduction, which soon presents the sound of a distant fanfare and of a falling figure in the woodwind, imitative of a cuckoo sound. The pace quickens, the main faster section of the movement begins, and the 'cuckoo' phrase is re-identified as the beginning of a long, song-like melody. In fact it is a song, one which Mahler had included in his set, 'Songs of a Wayfaring Lad'. The exposition, based on this extended melody, is repeated. A short development, with a new theme for horns, reaches a point of increased tension at which point the fanfare of the introduction is recalled. The music leads on to a recapitulation and a happy mood then prevails.

Nostalgia, however, pervades the second movement, a 'Ländler' or German waltz in A major, that has a lilt, reminiscent of Schubert or Bruckner. Equally redolent of tradition is the contrasting central section or trio in C major, which is in a more relaxed vein, after which a condensed version of the opening section rounds the movement off.

'Frère Jacques', also known in English as 'Brother John', is a French nursery rhyme, traditionally sung in a round. The words tell of a friar who has overslept, and is urged to wake up and sound the bell for Matins – the midnight, or very early-morning prayers for which a monk would be expected to wake.

But in Mahler's hands, the round is grotesquely shifted into the minor key, to form the Funeral March of the third movement. Muffled timpani tap the rhythm; a solo muted double-bass begins the tune in D minor and other instruments join in. There is an interruption by way of some vulgar street music, complete with bass drum and cymbals, but the round resumes. Then comes a different kind of interruption – this time by way of a delicate melody that also originated as one of the composer's earlier songs. Once more the round is heard, now a semitone higher, with some slight alterations, eventually coming to a somewhat uneasy end, as the music moves to the finale.

What seem to be shrieks of despair are heard, but are banished by an upward-striving theme in F minor, with a gentler theme in D flat major close on its heels. The 'home' key of D major will, in fact, not emerge until after the argumentative middle section, where it manifests itself in an exultation of brass. But there is still more to come. Already the movement has, in several ways, recalled the opening movement, and now a quieter section brings back the cuckoo-calls, seemingly a recollection of some pastoral vision. But the heroic note returns on the brass and a prolonged blaze of D major ends the symphony in triumphant mode.

Programme Notes by Philip R Buttall

www.philiprbuttall.co.uk

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Plymouth's own Symphony Orchestra

The Plymouth Symphony Orchestra has been central to the musical life of the city for over 145 years and we are thrilled to be back playing live classical music, after such a long break due to the pandemic. During this time our members, who travel far and wide from Devon and Cornwall to attend rehearsals, have continued to support the orchestra, and this has allowed us to come back and perform a fabulous new season of concerts. This includes performances from international artists Joanna MacGregor CBE and Maria Wloszczowska, together with a great range of orchestral favourites from Bernstein's Symphonic Dances from West Side Story, to Sibelius's Violin Concerto and Tchaikovsky's 5th Symphony.

In 1875 a local teacher of music, Dr Samuel Weekes, brought together a group of musician friends and founded what was then known as an Orchestral Society: their first concert was presented in the graceful Tea Rooms of Plymouth's old Royal Hotel. The renamed Plymouth Symphony Orchestra can claim to be one of the longest-established orchestras in the country, with an amazing record of continuity: the founding conductor was succeeded by his son; his grandson, John Weekes, was a vice-president until recently! The present conductor, Anne Kimber, is only the sixth in over 145 years.

As well as well-known works, amongst the contemporary pieces performed in recent years have been several specially commissioned from local composers, including Judy Whitlock, who leads the double bass section.

Many distinguished soloists have performed with the orchestra, including Nigel Kennedy, Peter Donohoe, Julian Lloyd Webber OBE, Anna Markland, Ralph Kirshbaum, Noriko Ogawa, Craig Ogden, Tasmin Little, Thomas Gould, Joanna MacGregor CBE, Jennifer Pike and Guy Johnston.

Importantly, the purpose of Samuel Weekes in founding the orchestra has remained central to all its activities: to bring friends together once a week to make music.

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