

MUSICON

Concert season 2023-2024

Stunning music in historic Durham venues



Welcome to MUSICON's 2023-24 Season!

I'm proud to be the new Artistic Director of this unique, Durham-based concert series, for what promises to be a superb and varied season of concerts.

If you're picking up a MUSICON brochure for the first time, you may be surprised to learn that the series has a venerable history dating back to October 1969 – making this our 55th season. But although we've been presenting world-class music and artists in Durham every year since then – even through the pandemic – you could be forgiven for not knowing we're here.

This year we're working especially hard to spread the word and ensure that our unique mix of classical, contemporary and traditional music reaches everyone in Durham and the surrounding areas.

Promoted by Durham University's Music Department, our concerts take place around the city from October to May, and feature artists of international renown. We believe it's vital that art should be affordable to all – particularly in these difficult economic times – so our ticket prices are very low in comparison with typical professional concerts. No-one should be prevented from attending our concerts through lack of means – see Ticket Information at the back of this brochure for more details.

This season we have a fantastic mix of concerts – truly something for everyone. We start by celebrating the 400th anniversary of the death of one of England's greatest composers, **William Byrd**, in the company of leading viol consort **Fretwork** (October), as well as an opportunity to Come and Sing some of his most famous choral pieces, culminating in a performance at Cathedral Evensong.

There's more Early Music in the concerts by MUSICON regulars **EXAUDI** (February) and the sensational young ensemble **Idrisi** (January), who bring their genre-busting performances of medieval songs to the Chapter House as part of the Durham Vocal Festival.

The heartlands of Classical music are represented by Royal Northern Sinfonia, who bring a glorious programme of Mendelssohn, Janáček and others in November.

Our ever-popular **East Asian** strand returns with two fascinating fusions – one between Korean zither and bagpipes (November), plus a performance by **EAPOS Trio** (January), bridging three contrasting cultures and sound worlds.

The season is crowned by two astonishing pianists, **Rolf Hind** (January) and **Ben Smith** (April) – I can't wait to hear Hind's majestic interpretation of Messiaen's epic *Vingt Regards* in the transcendental surroundings of Durham Cathedral.

Throughout the season we'll be partnering with schools and colleges around Durham to offer workshop and open rehearsal opportunities with visiting artists to young people. Over the coming years we aim to grow our relationships with groups within the local community, as a unique resource offering access to some of the world's top professional musicians on our doorstep. We're keen to hear from anyone interested in partnering with us in this way.

I hope to see you at a MUSICON concert very soon!



James Weeks, Chair of MUSICON

Saturday 14 October, 10.30am-6.15pm, Chapter House, Durham Cathedral

Come and Sing Day: William Byrd

All-day choral workshop with a unique Evensong performance

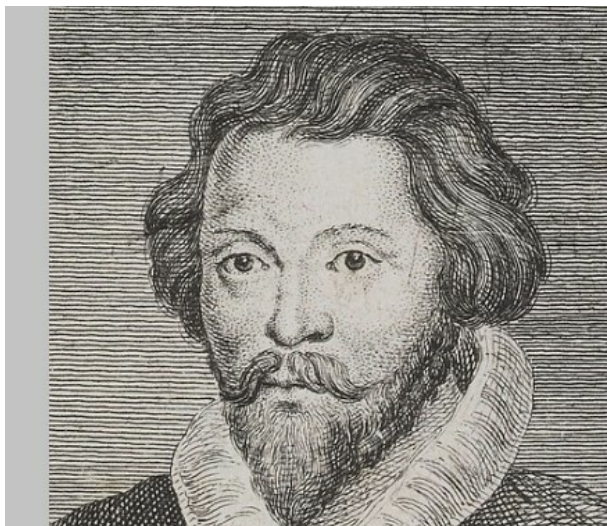
Renowned choral conductor James Weeks (EXAUDI Vocal Ensemble and Durham University) leads an inspiring day exploring the rich and varied music of 'England's nightingale', **William Byrd** (c.1540-1623), in the 400th anniversary year of his death.

Byrd was the leading composer of the Elizabethan Age, his career spanning religious upheavals and huge changes in English society. He wrote in every genre – English anthems for Anglican worship, Latin motets and masses for the secret Catholic rites (in which he himself participated), songs, madrigals, music for viols, virginals and organ. Favouring the depth and intricacy of the polyphonic style throughout his career, Byrd's music touches the sublime, and is extremely beautiful to sing.

This special workshop takes place in the magnificent Chapter House of Durham Cathedral, and culminates in a unique opportunity to for participants to sing one of the workshop pieces as an Introit at the cathedral's service of Evensong that evening. The Cathedral Choir will sing the rest of the service after our performance.

Tickets:
£16 standard
£5.50 students
£1.50 under-18s

For more information and tickets, visit the Durham Cathedral website.



Wednesday 18 October, 7.30pm, Elvet Methodist Church, 8 Old Elvet, Durham

Fretwork: William Byrd and his Contemporaries

William Byrd: Fantasies and In nomines; Five-part Pavan; Browning; Prelude and Ground

Robert Parsons: Ave Maria; De la Court; Ut Re Mi; In nomines

Thomas Tallis: Third Psalm Tune

Robert White: In nomine

Tickets:

£10 standard

£5 students

£1 under-18s

One of the world's great chamber ensembles, the viol consort Fretwork makes a welcome return to MUSICON with its acclaimed programme of music by the English Renaissance composer William Byrd, the 400th anniversary of whose death falls this year. Fretwork's engaging presentation brings to life Byrd's mellifluous and deeply expressive music, alongside music by his friends and contemporaries Parsons, Tallis and White.



Wednesday 1 November, 7.30pm, Elvet Methodist Church, 8 Old Elvet, Durham

Royal Northern Sinfonia: Mendelssohn's String Octet

Amy Beach: Pastorale

Grażyna Bacewicz: Wind Kwintet

Leoš Janáček: Mládí

Felix Mendelssohn: String Octet in E minor

We are thrilled to welcome soloists from Royal Northern Sinfonia to MUSICON for a special evening of chamber music classics.

Leoš Janáček's *Mládí* (Youth) is a wistful, nostalgic but celebratory look back on his younger life, a fabulous showcase for the superb wind players of Royal Northern Sinfonia, who also have a chance to shine in Bacewicz's Quintet - a piece that encompasses both spiky, edgy melodies and velvety smooth textures in its brief duration.

The strings take over in the second half for the creative verve of Mendelssohn's String Octet, a work of utter brilliance and understated emotional undercurrents, while the evening starts with the gentle melodies of pioneering composer Amy Beach.

Tickets:
£10 standard
£5 students
£1 under-18s



Tuesday 21 November, 7:30pm, Department of Music, Palace Green, Durham

East Asian Fusions 1 - Geomungo and Bagpipes

Heo Yoonjeong, a leading exponent of the ancient Korean geomungo zither, meets Cassandre Balbar, a brilliant multi-instrumentalist specialising in bagpipes and medieval recorder. Each performer showcases traditional repertoire, and then they come together, traversing time and space in a spirit of sympathy and understanding, and bringing their sound worlds into alignment. Fascinating new harmonies flow from this fusion – music to the ears, and resonance reverberating through the human heart.

Tickets:
£10 standard
£5 students
£1 under-18s



Tuesday 16 January, 7.30pm, Durham Cathedral

Rolf Hind, piano

Olivier Messiaen: *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*

A unique chance to hear one of the pinnacles of the piano repertoire, performed by world-renowned pianist and composer Rolf Hind in the transcendent space of Durham Cathedral.

Messiaen's *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, composed in 1944, is a suite of twenty pieces for solo piano meditating on the infancy of Jesus. Lasting two hours, it is a true tour-de-force, drawing an astonishing variety of harmonic colour and richness from the piano in music of extreme virtuosity and spiritual depth. Rarely performed in its entirety, the cycle is one of Messiaen's greatest achievements, and Rolf Hind one of its leading modern interpreters.

Presented in association with Durham Cathedral.

Tickets:

£15 standard

£5 students

£1 under-18s





Monday 29 January, 7:30pm, Durham Town Hall, Market Place, Durham

Trio EAPOS: East Asian Soundscapes

Trio EAPOS (East Asian Pool of Sound) is an exciting new fusion group bringing together the sonorities and patterns of three highly distinctive instruments from three different countries. Naoko Kikuchi plays the Japanese koto zither, Hong Yu the Korean daegeum flute, and Wu Wei the Chinese sheng mouth organ. Each is a celebrated master in their art, spanning a huge range of styles both ancient and modern. At the same time, they strive to push the boundaries of tradition, generating fresh new sounds through inter-cultural collaboration.

Tickets:
 £10 standard
 £5 students
 £1 under-18s



Tuesday 30 January, 7.30pm, Chapter House, Durham Cathedral

Idrîsî Ensemble

Merging sound installation, cutting-edge research, ancient Mediterranean traditions and experimental song, this is a concert like no other. Young London-based Idrîsî Ensemble brings together instrumentalists from around the world, jazz, rock and traditional music singers, calligraphers, composers, sound artists and medieval music specialists. Together they give voice to female troubadours, also called trobairitz, a neglected tradition on the fringe of medieval Christendom.

Idrîsî has developed a stunningly ornate and microtonal form of singing for this beautiful ancient repertoire, rigorously based on medieval treatises, pre-Gregorian and Mediterranean traditions. This will be an entrancing, ear-opening evening – prepare to be astonished and seduced.

Presented in association with Durham Vocal Festival.

Tickets:
£10 standard
£5 students
£1 under-18s



Tuesday 13 February, 7.30pm, Durham Town Hall, Market Place, Durham

EXAUDI

'In dew of roses' - songs for loving and parting

John Dowland: Songs for four voices

Thomas Morley: Madrigals for four voices

Barbara Monk Feldman: The Gentlest Chord

Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen: Song and other works

Tickets:

£10 standard

£5 students

£1 under-18s

EXAUDI
vocal ensemble

Virtuoso vocal ensemble EXAUDI's appearances in MUSICON and Durham Vocal Festival have become firm favourites with audiences over the past few years. Now an Ensemble-in-Residence at Durham University, they return with a programme of intimate love songs from across the centuries, from limpid Elizabethan madrigals by Dowland and Morley to modern Danish composer Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's stunning and moving tribute to Dowland, *Song*.

The concert will also feature music specially composed for EXAUDI by A-level students at St Leonard's Catholic School, in partnership with Durham Music Service.

Presented in collaboration with Durham Vocal Festival.



Wednesday 24 April, 7.30pm, Music Department, Palace Green, Durham

Ben Smith, piano Grooves

Astonishing young pianist Ben Smith explores the intricacies of rhythm and repetition in a programme that – amongst other things – investigates dance forms of the French baroque, middle-eastern drum patterns, phasing, and microtimings of rubato and swing. *Grooves* considers what happens when numerical abstractions collide with the physicality of performed music. That is, what happens when rhythms become grooves.

Presenting old and new work with radically different formulations of rhythm, the programme is bookended by two ultra-virtuosic works from the 1970s avant-garde: Ichiyanagi's very rarely performed *Time Sequence*, and Xenakis' monumental *Evryali*.

Toshi Ichiyanagi: *Time Sequence* (1976)

Richard Beaudoin: *Chopin Desséché* (2009)

Ruth Crawford Seeger: *Piano Study in Mixed Accents* (1930)

Martin Iddon: new work (2023)

Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre: *Suite No. 3 in A minor* (1687)

Frank Zappa: *The Black Page* (1976)

Conlon Nancarrow (arr. Ben Smith): *Study No. 11 for Player Piano* (1965-1969)

Nicholas A. Huber: *Darabukka* (1976)

Olivier Messiaen: *Ile de feu II* (1949)

Ryuichi Sakamoto: *hibari* (2009)

Iannis Xenakis: *Evryali* (1973)



Tickets:
£10 standard
£5 students
£1 under-18s

Ticket Information

Purchasing Tickets

Online

All concerts are listed on our webpage at www.durham.ac.uk/musicon, which contains links to all booking sites.

On the door

If you are unable to book online, tickets are generally available on the door on the evening of performance (or reserve at musicon@durham.ac.uk). Cash or card payments only.

If you wish to attend our concerts but are prevented from doing so through hardship, please get in touch at musicon@durham.ac.uk.

Doors open 30 mins before the performance starts.



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