

APRIL 8, 2024 BY *PianoPlus International Recital Series*

PRESS RELEASE

The new series of PianoPlus masterclasses and recitals will take place between September and October 2024 at the All Saints' Church, Orpington. The new line-up features co-Artistic Directors Natalie Tsaldarakis and Panayotis Archontides (Ivory Duo Piano Ensemble) in a masterclass and recital for piano four-hands with further solo recitals and masterclasses offered by Dr. Robert Markham, Jelena Makarova, and Julian Jacobson, Steinway Artist and Chair of the Beethoven Piano Society of Europe.

SOUTH LONDON, 08/04/24 –A new series combining masterclasses with professional concert was launched in the fall 2023. Following on its success, the series returns to All Saints in 2024.

Conceived by pianists Natalie Tsaldarakis and Panayotis Archontides, who perform and record as a piano duo team 'The Ivory Duo Piano Ensemble', the series reflects their concern about audience development and music appreciation more broadly. 'The younger generations seem to be growing up in a sort of a cultural void, in which the piano, once intimately intertwined with family life, is slowly being marginalised as an after-school activity, essentially rendered meaningless by lack of association with anything outside of itself, other than pressing keys and passing exams. The wider changes in listening and culture consumption, brought about by technological advances are directly impacting classical music, despite a great desire to learn and perform.'

The pianists add: 'that is not to negate the wealth of experiences that can be found easily in central London, but there is strong need to cultivate new audiences, among those who are not regular concert-goers. For parents, it is difficult to co-ordinate outings, especially as concerts tend to finish as late as 9:30pm and the commute is a further important problem. For those of a certain age, outings at night are not an attractive option, and for those who are at work weekday concerts require an embedded habit of concert-going. The time and effort one needs to invest, can act as a real barrier to experiencing great music, especially since it's easier and cheaper to stay at home and scroll through a screen.'

The Recitals:

- 1. The Ivory Duo Piano Ensemble** will open the series with a recital for piano four-hands. As a celebration of Busoni's centennial and a follow-up to their exploration of Busoni's *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*, which will take place earlier in the year (July 17, Busoni 2024 conference, at City, University of London), their programme for the recital will include:

Busoni's Finnish Folk Songs op.27, alongside Debussy's *Le Triomphe de Bacchus*, Lola Perrin's *Homage to Debussy* (written for the duo), Britten's *Sea Preludes*, and Ravel's *La Valse*.

(Date: 7 September 2024).

Short bio: The pianists are Convivium Records Artists since 2020. Broadcasts include BBC Radio 3, WQXR (NY, US), Scala Radio, ERA-2, ERA-3, Athens 98.4. The pianists are particularly known for their promotion of new and unusual repertoire for piano four-hands and two pianos, without excluding occasional excursions into solo repertoire (both in their releases and on stage) and collaborations with other instrumentalists, ensembles and vocalists. They are included in the *American Concerto*

Compendium (2nd ed.) for their recording of Helen Hagan's piano concerto, which continues to attract attention especially in the US. This same recording was used in a commemorative documentary released by Yale University. Previously Artist Teachers of the American College of Greece and piano professors at the National Conservatory of Greece for a decade, they perform in venues such as Athens Concert Hall, Steinway Hall, Southbank, Fairfield Halls, St John's Smith Square, St-Martin-in-the-Fields, St-James-Piccadilly.

2. The next recital will see **Dr. Robert Markham** offer the following programme:

Beethoven Polonaise Op 89, FX Mozart Fantasie and Krakoviak, Schumann Fantasy Op. 17, and Verdi-Liszt Rigoletto Paraphrase. (Date: 14 September 2024)

The pianist remarked: 'FX Mozart is the son of Wolfgang Amadeus, a composer in his own right who established a career in what is now Lviv, Ukraine. I have recorded 2 discs of his piano works for Naxos, due for release December 2024/January 2025.'

Short bio: Dr. Markham is the teacher of Lauren Zhang, winner of the BBC Young Musician of the Year 2018, himself a finalist in the 1994 Tchaikovsky International Competition in Moscow, First Prize Winner at the International Vincenzo Bellini Competition in Italy, the Frinna Awerbuch International Piano Competition in New York, and Piano Prize winner of the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition. He is Senior Tutor in Piano at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Apart from the masterclass and the solo recital, Dr. Markham will also conduct a short Q&A for those interested in auditioning to enter conservatoires.

3. Lithuanian pianist **Jelena Makarova** will offer a solo recital with the title "Autumn Elegie". With an active interest in promoting the works by women composers, the pianist will perform: Agnieszka Lasko's Nocturne "Autumn" (from *22 Nocturnes for Chopin* by women composers), Nadia Boulanger's Trois Petites Pièces Pour Piano (1914); Lili Boulanger's Trois Morceaux Pour Piano alongside Ludwig van Beethoven's Sonata No. 15 in D major, Op.28 (Pastoral); Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis's (1875-1911), Prelude "Autumn" ("Ruduo"), VL.264; Igor Stravinsky's, Sonata (1924) and Sergei Rachmaninoff's, Elegie Op.3 No.1.
(Date: 28 September 2024)

Short bio: A distinguished graduate of the M.K.Čiurlionis School of Arts (Lithuania), the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Drama (Master's), Jelena also graduated from London's Royal Academy of Music (PGDip), where she studied piano with Colin Stone. Active participant in a masterclass with French pianist Pierre Laurent-Aimard and performer at György Kurtag's Music Festival, where she was also coached by the composer himself, Jelena is particularly noted for promoting new music. She is a co-founding member of the "Living Songs" project, Trio Sonorité, and Chromatikon art/music collective. The ensembles were recently featured on Women's Radio Station as part of the *Future Classic Women Awards*. Jelena was also a pianist for Errollyn Wallen's opera 'The Paradis Files', touring the UK as member of the BBC Concert Orchestra ensemble. Other collaborations include the New London Orchestra, National Youth Wind Orchestra of Great Britain, The Belfast Ensemble and Royal Ballet School. Her recording releases include a digital CD in collaboration with the Lithuanian Music

Information Centre and Lithuanian National Radio and Television, and the complete piano works by Stewart Lane for the composer's "Night Letters" album (digital release, March 2024).

4. The series will draw to a close on October 12, with **Julian Jacobson**, Steinway Artist and senior piano professor at both Royal College of Music (London) and the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire of Music. His recital programme features the following:

L. V. Beethoven, Sonata op 53 in C ("Waldstein"); Julian Jacobson, Piccola musica notturna; Claude Debussy, Preludes Book 1 (Date: October 12, 2024).

Short bio: In a career spanning five decades, Julian has performed extensively in more than 40 countries as well as maintaining an intensive UK concert and recording schedule. His 70th birthday in 2017 was marked by concerts in London and Paris where he performed the virtuoso "War Trilogy" of Prokofiev (sonatas 6, 7 and 8) together with sonatas by Schubert and Beethoven, to critical acclaim.

He made his London debut at the Purcell Room in 1974, followed immediately by the first of five appearances in the Park Lane Group's annual Young Artists series and his Wigmore Hall debut as both solo recitalist and chamber musician. During the 1980s he established himself as a fine duo and ensemble pianist, partnering artists such as Zara Nelsova, Sandor Vegh, Ivry Gitlis, Lydia Mordkovitch, David Geringas, Christian Lindberg and Manuela Wiesler as well as many leading UK instrumentalists including Nigel Kennedy, Steven Isserlis, Moray Welsh, Colin Carr, Alexander Baillie and Philippa Davies.

Former Head of Keyboard Studies at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Julian is an active recitalist both as soloist and a duettist (Julian Jacobson and Mariko Brown Piano Duo), with a large and varied discography for labels such as Meridian, Chandos, Hyperion, Decca Argo, BIS, Continuum, Metier and SOMM. An ongoing commitment to contemporary music has led to many commissions and premieres. In 1987 he gave the critically acclaimed UK premiere of Ligeti's now famous Etudes Book One; a subsequent recording for BBC Radio 3 was highly praised by the composer. Composers who have written for him include Robert Saxton, Simon Bainbridge, Benedict Mason, Philip Cashian, Daryl Runswick, Keith Tippett, Charles Camilleri and Robert Keeley; Michael Nyman wrote the piano trio "Time Will Pronounce" for Julian's ensemble the Trio of London.

The Structure:

In the 2024 series, all masterclasses start at 3pm, with the recitals starting at 6:10pm. The general public can choose between a day pass (£20), a recital-only ticket (£12), or a series-ticket (£60). Tickets will go on sale in August.

The Masterclasses:

To take part in the masterclasses as an active participant, pianists will need to apply and submit one or two links of recently recorded live performances. Along with a short bio (up to 200 words), they should also propose two pieces out of which one will be heard at masterclass. For those applying to more than one masterclass, up to four pieces may be submitted for consideration. Duration of the masterclass is 40 minutes per participant. For more info on applying and costs, please email the Co-Artistic Directors at ivoryduopiano@yahoo.com or visit the dedicated Facebook page as links and info are being released. **Deadline for application: 31 July 2024.**

To schedule an interview with the Co-Artistic Directors, please contact:

ivoryduopiano@yahoo.com

Links:

<http://www.ivoryduopiano.com/pianoplus2024>

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61552606717536>

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