

Welcome



Welcome to the Barbican for tonight's concert conducted by Gianandrea Noseda. We also welcome our soloist, Canadian violinist James Ehnes, to perform Bartók's Second Violin Concerto. Noseda and Ehnes work together frequently: one of their most recent collaborations was at this year's BBC Proms, where their performance of Bruch's Violin Concerto earned excellent reviews. The LSO was delighted to perform last summer at the festival in Turin, where Noseda is artistic director.

Tonight's concert opens with the premiere of *individual objects*: a five-minute work by Ian Vine which was commissioned by LSO Discovery as part of the UBS Soundscapes: Pioneers scheme. Supporting this scheme is just one of the ways that UBS works in partnership with the LSO to provide new opportunities for young composers and players, for which we are most grateful.

After the interval we hear Prokofiev's elegiac Sixth Symphony, composed in the aftermath of World War II. Despite later being condemned by the Soviet authorities it was received enthusiastically by the first audiences, with the conductor of the premiere Evgeny Mravinsky saying, 'I would not change a note of it'.

I hope you enjoy tonight's concert and that you can join us again at the Barbican soon.

Kathryn McDowell

Kathryn McDowell
LSO Managing Director

News

BBC Radio 3 Lunchtime Concerts at LSO St Luke's: Pavel Haas Quartet Residency

Following the great success of the recent Chopin Piano series at LSO St Luke's, the BBC Radio 3 Lunchtime Concerts continue this Thursday and until 11 November with former BBC New Generation Artists, the Pavel Haas Quartet. The Czech quartet, praised by *The Times* as 'the world's most exciting string quartet', will perform works by Beethoven, Debussy, Ravel and Schubert. Tickets £9. Book through the Barbican Box Office on 020 7638 8891 or online:

iso.co.uk/lunchtimeconcerts

YouTube Symphony Orchestra 2011

March 2011 will mark the YouTube Symphony Orchestra's return – and once again, you can be a part of it! Submit your video audition via the YouTube website, and the best and most creative performers will be selected for the final performance at the Sydney Opera House in March 2011 under the direction of world-renowned conductor and YouTube Symphony Artistic Advisor, Michael Tilson Thomas. Check out the audition categories and find out more:

www.youtube.com/symphony

Donatella Flick Conducting Competition 2011 Thursday 4 November 7.30pm, Barbican

Witness a closely-fought contest between three promising young conductors at this year's climax of the biennial Donatella Flick Conducting Competition. The LSO will perform challenging repertoire under the baton of each candidate and a prestigious panel of judges will decide who most deserves the precious prize – a year as Assistant Conductor of the LSO. The stakes are high: David Afkham, the 2008 Competition winner, has since become the first Bernard Haitink Fund for Young Talent recipient and works regularly with the Chicago Symphony and Royal Concertgebouw orchestras. Tickets £8–19. Book through the Barbican Box Office on 020 7638 8891 or online:

iso.co.uk/whatson
www.conducting.org

Ian Vine (b 1974) individual objects

Ian Vine's new commission for the LSO forms part of a series of projects about unique yet closely related musical 'objects'. The titles are often numerical: *forty objects* (2007) involves 40 electric guitars; *fifty objects* (2007) is written for an ensemble. Most ambitious may be *over 5000 individual works* (2007), written for piano, in which each variation is just one of 5,040 versions of the piece (Vine admits he hasn't yet played them all). He isn't, he insists, a minimalist; but he is intrigued by the idea of similar 'objects' – individual musical figures or events which may each sound similar but are quite unique.

Vine's imagination was ignited when he saw the piece *Over 10,000 Individual Works* by American artist Allan McCollum. McCollum's 'works' are plaster casts taken from the components of ordinary household objects: containers, kitchen items, bottle caps. The casts are painted grey, and displayed in huge quantities – but McCollum devised a mathematical protocol that avoided repetition of the components. His works may look very similar, but each is unique.

Vine follows this idea into music, his often sparse sound world allowing listeners to identify and follow the individual 'objects'. Even when writing for orchestra, as on this occasion, he refuses to succumb to a luxuriant meld of sound. Instead, he points out that each player is an individual, as is each part – even the massed string section, which he gives an itchy tremolando pizzicato to make each instrument in *individual objects* unique.

The influence of the visual arts threads through Vine's work. For several years he used painting, often numinous layering of Rothko-esque colour, as 'a way of working through an idea in the music'. His *first moon* project, founded in 1998, takes music out of traditional concert halls and into galleries and other spaces; and his music has been performed in the Sammlung Hoffmann gallery in Berlin and in London's National Portrait Gallery (*perfect objects*, 2010).

Programme note and interview © David Jays

David Jays writes about the performing arts for The Sunday Times, among others, and is editor of Dance Gazette.

Ian Vine was born in England but spent his formative years in Libya and Hong Kong. His music is performed across Europe and further afield, and has been broadcast worldwide. Commissioners of his work have included the London Sinfonietta, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Ensemble Recherche and Matthew Herbert. He has received performances by, among others, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé, Ensemble 10/10, Kokoro, Psappha, 4-Mality, Radius, Continuum (Canada) and 175 East (New Zealand). His work has been released on Accidental Records, Kairos, and London Sinfonietta labels and is distributed by New Voices at Sound and Music.

Ian Vine studied at the Royal Northern College of Music with Anthony Gilbert and, later, privately with Simon Holt. Between 1999 and 2004 he was Tutor in Electroacoustic Music at the RNCM, and also taught for a time at the University of Manchester. From 2002–07 he was a participant in the inaugural Blue Touch Paper scheme with the London Sinfonietta, producing three works for the ensemble.

As well as tonight's premiere with the LSO, highlights this season include the premiere of a commission from sinfonia ViVA, and performances by the Fidelio Trio/Soundings, Trio Atem, and Radius. Ian lives in Manchester and is artistic director of *first moon*.

UBS Soundscapes: Pioneers

Ian Vine's *individual objects* was commissioned by LSO Discovery and is part of the UBS Soundscapes: Pioneers series, an innovative commissioning project that brings new musical gems to our audiences and gives UK-based composers from a wide variety of musical backgrounds the chance to write for a symphony orchestra on the world stage.



Composer interview

David Jays speaks to UBS Soundscapes: Pioneers composer Ian Vine



Many of your pieces are built around the idea of individual objects. Why does the idea interest you?

The whole thing was kicked off by seeing the work of the New York artist Allan McCollum. His piece called *Over 10,000 Individual Works* (1987) is made from casts of ordinary objects like washing-up liquid bottles or food containers; they are small,

spherical objects, painted grey and laid out on a flat table. McCollum devised a mathematical system which allowed him to make a combination of these components and yet never make the same object twice.

Over 10,000 Individual Works absolutely blew me away, and struck me as a fascinating idea. I'm not actually a musical minimalist – I don't like repetition, but I suppose I do like non-exact repetition. The musical objects could be a combination of instruments or a musical figure. I'm not sure why I'm so fascinated by them, but I think it's the idea of presenting objects which are related but nonetheless unique.

How did you approach writing *individual objects* for the LSO?

I wrote several versions of the piece, which distilled the idea. It has become a lot more straightforward since the first version, when I wanted seven versions of the same piece to happen together, each time in a different order. To present that concept with clarity was almost impossible. It is important to me that an idea is fairly obvious to an audience, or at least graspable.

And the individual objects are different musical figures?

Yes, but each instrumentalist is an individual as well, and every part is arguably an individual in the orchestra. I know that the string section, for example, will often play in unison – but I've added a tremolando pizzicato which will differentiate the players.

Is composing an isolated business?

It's quite abstract. You're just dealing with imagination – it's all about imaginary performance at the writing stage. I have had composer's block, but as I get older I find more cunning ways of working; I don't run out of ideas. In any piece, you come up against points where you don't really know what to do, but they're always solvable.

Although born in England, you grew up in Libya and Hong Kong. What was that like?

My dad was a civil engineer, so we moved around with him. It was great having that experience. I was very young when we went to Libya, but I can remember it quite clearly. Hong Kong was amazing, and I was exposed to a lot of music from around the world: not just western classical and pop music, but also Far Eastern and Indian music. I never trained as a classical instrumentalist, but I always wrote music and strummed guitar in rock bands as a teenager. Then I realised that I couldn't play the stuff I wanted to write, so I would have to learn notation in order to hand my music over to people who could play it properly.

How have you used painting as an aid to composition?

I haven't really painted in the past three years, but about ten years ago it became clear to me that it was a useful way of thinking about music. You create a piece of music in a similar way, through layering and so on.

Your *first moon* project takes music out of concert halls and into art galleries. What does that add?

I find it a really interesting way of presenting music. As an audience member, I prefer that context. In *ohne titel* (2008), a piece I wrote specifically for the Sammlung Hoffmann gallery in Berlin, people could walk around and experience the music differently depending on where they stood (the musicians were in four rooms). No two people had the same experience.

Béla Bartók (1881–1945)

Violin Concerto No 2 (1937–38)

- 1 *Allegro non troppo*
- 2 *Andante tranquillo*
- 3 *Allegro molto*

James Ehnes violin

Bartók's compositions of the 1930s are not noted for an air of compromise. The academic recognition he achieved by the middle of the same decade did nothing to blunt a mind which fed on the challenges offered by exploring and extending tonality. Despite success at home and a steady stream of commissions, nowhere in Europe in this period could be described as easy for those who worked at the frontiers of artistic endeavour, and Bartók came in for his share of opprobrium from the right-wing press. One of the silliest of criticisms was that Bartók's music was the product of 'a bleak and destructive soul'. None of the works composed in any period of Bartók's life would lend credibility to this sort of nonsense, least of all (of the works of the late 1930s) the Second Violin Concerto.

As far as Bartók was concerned the Second Violin Concerto was, effectively, his only such work for public consumption. It has been placed second since the composer's death in order to avoid confusion with a much earlier work that had never been performed in Bartók's lifetime. This 'first' violin concerto was revived after Bartók's death and given its premiere in 1958. The 'second' concerto was written for the Hungarian violinist Zoltán Székely, between 1937 and 1938 when, amongst other things, Bartók was engaged on writing *Contrasts* for violin, clarinet and piano. It seems that the composer had originally intended to write a series of variations for violin and orchestra, but Székely had insisted on the three movements of the standard concerto. In the end, both artists had their own way: Székely was presented with a three-movement concerto in accordance with his wishes, but the slow movement is a set of free variations and the finale is a kind of variation fantasy on the opening *Allegro non troppo*.

As a whole, the musical language of the concerto is more immediately approachable than much of what Bartók wrote in the 1930s, yet this does not prevent moments of extraordinary harmonic ferocity, particularly in the outer movements.

The impression at the opening of the concerto, however, with its pulsing B major chord, is one of folk inflected lyricism. For all the gentleness of its first entry, the part for the soloist is extraordinarily taxing: both musical tensions and virtuosity reach a climax in and around the cadenza. The relaxed outer sections of the slow movement surround a brief, athletic scherzando break led by the soloist. The broadly-developed finale has unconcealed affinities with the first movement, not least in the cut of its opening solo theme, but never does the resemblance lead to pointless repetition; as ever, Bartók looks beyond one range of thematic and harmonic possibilities to discover a set of new ones.

Programme note © Jan Smaczny

Jan Smaczny is Hamilton Harty Professor of Music at Queen's University, Belfast. A well known authority on Czech music, he has written widely on Dvořák including a book on his Cello Concerto.

INTERVAL: 20 minutes

More violin concertos coming up ...

Thu 28 Oct: Viktoria Mullova
Stravinsky Violin Concerto

Wed 10 Nov: Nikolaj Znaider
Elgar Violin Concerto

Wed 15 Dec: Midori
Bruch Violin Concerto No 1

Tue 21 Dec: Viktoria Mullova
Beethoven Violin Concerto

Tue 18 & Sun 23 Jan: Sergey Khachatryan
Shostakovich Violin Concerto No 2

Thu 17 Feb: Janine Jansen
Brahms Violin Concerto

Wed 23 & Thu 24 Mar: Leonidas Kavakos
Shostakovich Violin Concerto No 1