

The British Museum hosts first major music festival

16 – 29 April 2018

Organised by the British Museum and the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden and supported by the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Presented in association with BBC Radio 3

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- For the first time the British Museum, with the support of the German Foreign Office, is opening up its galleries to host a major two-week festival of musical performance.
 - Performances and panel discussions will explore the idea of museums as diplomats of the 21st century, reflecting world cultures and exchange

Taking place from 16th – 29th April 2018, '*Europe and the world: a symphony of cultures*' will explore Europe's interactions with the world and will strive to allow a dialogue between works of classical and contemporary music and the British Museum's extraordinary objects from all over the world. In doing so the festival will contribute to a better understanding of both the role of the encyclopaedic museum and the evolving relationship between Europe and the World.

Over two weeks the festival will feature seventeen different performances, some accompanied by panel discussions. Programmed by Artistic Director Daniel Kühnel, Director of the Hamburg Symphony, the programming follows on from a series of performative music festivals and panel discussions that took place in major museums in Jerusalem and Dresden.

The festival includes works by European composers, some of them musical pioneers of the twentieth century, whose challenging approach draws attention to ways in which the cultures of Europe have interacted with the cultures of the world. It also places musical performances in gallery environments that invite visitors to perceive synergies between cultures, across centuries, creating living encounters and echoing encounters of the past.

Works by composers including Ligeti, Berio, Stockhausen, Liszt, Messiaen, Strauss, Bartók, and Nono, will be featured alongside performances devoted to historic musical traditions from different parts of the world, including medieval temple music from China, classical music from India, Spanish colonial and flamenco music, Spiritual Japanese music from the 7th century and Byzantine choral music.

Performers include the London Sinfonietta, Ensemble für Intuitive Musik Weimar, Accademia del Piacere, Zhang Jun and his Kunqu Ensemble, Kaushiki Chakraborty and Ensemble, and Reigakusha Ensemble Tokyo.

As part of the festival, the historic Reading Room will be used for special performances. Audiences will be able to experience remarkable musical performances within this atmospheric space, including the closing concert of the festival, given by the Arditti Quartet, and repeat performances over both festival weekends of Ligeti's *Poème Symphonique* for 100 metronomes. This is a unique opportunity for visitors to experience the Reading Room whilst longer term plans for its use are being developed.

The festival will provide a huge variety of musical experiences across the Museum's galleries, featuring bold and challenging concerts which invite audiences to consider the collections in a new light. Performances will see different art forms juxtaposed with their surroundings, such as an evening of Japanese orchestral music from the 7th century - which was first heard at the Imperial Court in Kyoto and follows strict ceremonial rules - among the imposing stone sculptures of Ancient Egypt. Panel discussions will explore the role of museums in complex political times, continuing themes initiated in an international symposium held in Dresden in September 2017.

The British Museum is uniquely placed to host this festival. As a Museum of world cultures, where the whole of human history can be explored under one roof, it enables visitors to experience encounters between one culture and another, and to explore contemporary questions within a historical context.

In collaboration with the British Museum's festival 'Europe and the World: a symphony of cultures', BBC Radio 3 will bring its audiences three major programmes featuring content from the festival; Music Matters, Music Planet and In Tune. Hearing from performers, composers and historians, Music Matters will report from the festival highlighting significant objects from Indian, African and Asian cultures which show concepts that radically influenced and changed European music. Music Planet will broadcast a session with the ensemble Reigakusha who perform traditional Gagakum and will also record Moroccan singer/performer Aïcha Redouane from the festival for transmission on 4th May. Flagship drivetime show, In Tune, will be featuring performers from the festival including, on 23rd April, Romanian vocal ensemble Corul Madrigal.

The festival is generously supported by the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum said:

'Europe and the world hopes to encourage listening – to others, to ourselves and to the great symphony of cultures represented by the British Museum. With the generous support of the German Foreign Office, these performances will look at the role of Europe, and its relationship with the world. The universality of music reveals connections between cultures across the globe and allows us to explore our shared humanity through the British Museum's collection. This programming is a new departure for the Museum. As we think about the longer-term uses of the site at Bloomsbury, we can use music to find new ways to explore the spaces that our visitors see each day.'

Andreas Görgen, Director-General for Culture and Communication, German Foreign Office, said:

'The festival is part of the German Foreign Office's engagement to deepen the British-German cultural cooperation and to foster greater cooperation among our countries, institutions and partners abroad. In a global political landscape, it is important to facilitate access to culture and to champion European cooperation through museums as diplomats of the 21st century such as the British Museum and the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (SKD).'

Daniel Kühnel, Artistic Director of the festival said:

'The world collections of the British Museum provide extraordinary opportunities for musical performance. Here the material inheritance of the world's cultures is stored and deciphered, and we are invited to interpret the ways that regions and peoples assert their identities - an endless and urgent task. Here we can use music and performance to tell stories, explore new ideas in a historic setting and explore encounters between cultures. This festival continues the work done in Jerusalem and Dresden exploring paths towards a European identity shaped by a new openness to the world at large.'

Alan Davey, Controller BBC Radio 3, BBC Proms, BBC Orchestras and Choirs said:

'At BBC Radio 3 we've always believed that helping people to engage with music and culture from all over the world and at different historical moments is part of our public service mission. Therefore we're delighted to be sharing with our millions of listeners, some of the world class performances and debates from the British Museum's *Europe and the world: a symphony of cultures* festival.'

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Notes to editors:

Tickets on sale at:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/europe_and_the_world.aspx



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Event listings:***Performances*****Europe and the world: Strauss, Berio, Scelsi**

Mon 16 Apr, 19.00

This opening concert encapsulates the essence of the festival, which explores Europe's relationship with the world. It brings together three extraordinary works. *Metamorphosen*, Richard Strauss' 1945 commentary on the challenges of Europe, is performed by the London Sinfonietta in a version for seven instruments. *Recital for Cathy*, Luciano Berio's preoccupation with the meaning of the codes of European music when used in a ritual-like context, is performed by mezzo soprano Susan Bickley. *Xnoybis*, Giacinto Scelsi's intense meditation on Buddhist thought and culture, is performed by violinist Diego Tosi. Experience these works in the beautiful surroundings of the Parthenon Gallery.

£12 (£8)

Spiritual piano music of the world

Tue 17 Apr, 19.30

Join American pianist Jay Gottlieb for a performance exploring spiritual influences on western composers, where an Italian applies Indian techniques, a Moroccan takes on Afro-Cuban techniques and a Hungarian and a Frenchman apply Asian techniques. This performance features works by Obukhov, George Crumb, Scelsi, Ohana, Liszt and Messiaen, and takes place in the magnificent Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery of China and South Asia.

£12 (£8)

Classical and traditional Arabic music

Wed 18 Apr, 15.00

A concert of classical Arabic music from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries by the Al-Adwar Ensemble, led by acclaimed Moroccan singer/performer Aïcha Redouane. Many of the pieces are based on Sufi poems and directly inspired by the Arabic cultural Renaissance of the 19th century, known as al-Nahda. Performed in Room 70.

Free, just drop in, limited seating

Gagaku: spiritual music of the Japanese Middle Ages

Wed 18 Apr, 19.30

The Japanese ensemble Reigakusha plays *gagaku* – the world's oldest orchestral music still being performed today. This form of Japanese classical music was first performed at the imperial court in Kyoto in the 7th century and follows precise ceremonial rules. Performed in the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery (Room 4) for a dynamic and unique musical experience.

£12 (£8)

Baroque and flamenco music from Spain and the colonial Americas

Thu 19 Apr, 19.30

Accademia del Piacere under Fahmi Alquai and flamenco singer Arcángel present Baroque music of the Spanish colonial era in dialogue with the thrilling traditions of flamenco. Their programme of 'Mestizo music' celebrates the meetings of European, Amerindian and African musical ideas and traditions, giving birth to a brand-new music style.

£12 (£8)

Golijov's music for clarinet and string quartet

Fri 20 Apr, 15.00

A performance of Osvaldo Golijov's epic distillation of Jewish musical culture, from Hebrew chant to klezmer, for clarinet and string quartet, played by David Orlowsky and the Quartetto di Cremona. Golijov's music bridges the gap between East European Jewish klezmer music and the rhythmic world of South America. The music of this performance points to the universally relevant issue of exiled and pariah peoples – in the same room as the ancient Cyrus Cylinder, itself an early declaration of human rights. The Cyrus Cylinder is named after Cyrus the Great, who ended the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. Performed in Room 52.

Free, just drop in, limited seating

I, Hamlet: a kunqu opera

Fri 20 Apr, 19.30

Zhang Jun, known as 'the prince of kunqu', fuses Shakespeare's play with the traditions of Chinese kunqu opera. The performance is not only an interpretation of the story of *Hamlet*, but also explores the inner world of the play – the fierce fighting between the light and darkness, life and death, love and revenge. The 75-minute production is a one-man show where Zhang Jun plays four roles – Hamlet, Ophelia, the ghost of Hamlet's father and the gravedigger – in the way of traditional Chinese opera characters known as Sheng (male roles), Dan (female

roles), Jing (painted roles) and and Chou (clowns). Performed in the Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery of China and South Asia.

£12 (£8)

Ligeti's Poème Symphonique for 100 metronomes

Sat 21 Apr, Sun 22 Apr &

Sat 28 Apr, 11.00, 13.00 & 15.00

Ligeti was one of the 20th century's greatest avant-garde composers. One of his recurring styles was 'meccanico music', where instruments imitate clocks ticking, but at different speeds. The most extreme version of this is his Poème Symphonique, composed in 1962 for 100 metronomes. The metronomes are all set off at the same time at different speeds and gradually stop once they have run down. These performances take place in the Reading Room, which is temporarily reopening for the festival. In the place where countless famous readers studied, reflect on the relationship of time, knowledge, arts and spiritual echo.

Free, booking essential

John Cage's Music of Changes

Sat 21 Apr, 19.30

Pianist Francesco Tristano performs *Music of Changes*, John Cage's groundbreaking 1951 work of indeterminate music. Cage, widely known today for his *4' 33"*, was a pioneer of indeterminacy in music, where some aspects of performance are left to chance or the interpreter's choice. Decisions in this piece are made using the *I Ching*. The Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery of China and South Asia is an apt setting to reflect on the influences of Chinese culture and philosophy on western thought and music.

£12 (£8)

From Isfahan to Versailles:

Persia, the Ottoman court and French Baroque music

Sun 22 Apr, 15.00

Ensemble Constantinople take you on a musical journey where the music and poetry of Persian culture is performed in dialogue with music of the Ottoman and French courts. They will revisit some of the most beautiful Persian classical music from 16th and 17th centuries and link them to the music of two great Baroque composers, Marin Marais (1656–1728) from the court of Louis XIV at Versailles, and Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723) from the Ottoman court of Topkapi. This performance in Room 6 brings to mind the importance of ancient Mesopotamian cultures to the European identity, and the long history of exchange of ideas and cultures between east and west.

Free, just drop in, limited seating

Ritual music from the Temple of Attained Wisdom

Mon 23 Apr, 15.00

Enjoy a rare performance by the Zhi Hua Temple musicians. The legacy of over twenty generations, this Chinese instrumental and vocal music is preserved within a Ming dynasty temple in the Old City area of Beijing.

Free, just drop in, limited seating

A cappella music from Byzantine chant to the English Renaissance

Tue 24 Apr, 15.00

Romania's National Chamber Choir Marin Madrigal present a programme from Byzantine liturgical chant to English and European music of the 16th and 17th centuries. The concert features a range of beautiful Byzantine chant as well as works by Byrd, Dowland, Morley, Bennet, Weelkes, Pilkington, Lassus, Monteverdi, Widmann, Rossi, Costeley and Hassler. Performed in the Great Court.

Free, just drop in

Scelsi's piano music

Wed 25 Apr, 15.00

This concert with pianist Marianne Schroeder in the Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery of China and South Asia features piano music by Giacinto Scelsi, who was influenced by Buddhism and Asian spiritual thought. Scelsi spent hours every night continuously recording his own improvisations, and then, assisted by other composers editing these recordings, painstakingly adding detailed performance directions to the transcriptions. Schroeder studied with Scelsi and he gave her his entire piano work to perform and distribute it on records. Here she presents a programme that includes his *I Capricci di TY* (TY was Scelsi's wife Dorothy), *Rotativa* and *Four illustrations*, which express the transformation of the ego, a process which can be seen in the ten transformations of Vishnu.

Free, just drop in, limited seating

Stockhausen's Telemusik and Nachtmusik

Thu 26 Apr, 15.00

The works of Karlheinz Stockhausen are integral to 20th-century music. In this performance, the Ensemble für Intuitive Musik Weimar present two of his seminal pieces from the 1960s – *Telemusik* and *Nachtmusik*. *Telemusik* was written in 1966 for Japanese television and consists of recordings of traditional ethnic music from around the world, with electronically generated sounds. *Nachtmusik* is one of the 15 parts of *Aus den Sieben Tagen*, composed in May 1968 in reaction to a personal crisis. Stockhausen characterised this as 'intuitive music', produced primarily from intuition rather than the intellect of the performer. Stockhausen's works from this period are concerned with collecting the world as a means of understanding the world, which directly resonates with the idea behind this gallery (Room 2), Collecting the world.

Free, just drop in, limited seating

Ligeti's Etudes for Solo Piano

Fri 27 Apr, 19.30

Cathy Krier performs Ligeti's late piano etudes in the African Galleries – pieces which were directly inspired by polyrhythmic structures in traditional African music. Ligeti composed 18 etudes for solo piano between 1985 and 2001. They are one of the most significant sets of piano studies of the late 20th century, combining virtuosic passages with expressive lyricism. Performed in Room 25.

£12 (£8)

Classical and traditional Indian music

Sat 28 Apr, 19.30

A concert of classical Indian music presented by Kaushiki Charkraborty, critically acclaimed as the best Hindustani vocalist of her generation. The programme evokes the spiritual dimension of the objects on display in the Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery of China and South Asia.

£12 (£8)

20th-century string quartets

Sun 29 Apr, 15.00

The festival comes to a spectacular close with a concert by the world-renowned Arditti Quartet. With echoes of the concert at the beginning of the festival, Bartók's sixth string quartet was written out of the same concern for the fate of Europe as Richard Strauss' *Metamorphosen*. Nono's quartet *Fragmente-Stille, an Diotima* recalls the meeting with Berio and the Parthenon frieze, and raises questions about the relationship between the present and antiquity. Hosokawa's masterpiece *Silent Flowers*, like Scelsi's *Xnoybis*, requires the performers to constantly transform the sound, creating a sense of permanent transformation. While Scelsi is largely concerned with the spiritual realm, Hosokawa's work is grounded in traditional Japanese arts such as *ikebana* (flower arranging).

£12 (£8)

Panel discussions

The role of museums for cultural exchange in the 21st century

Mon 16 Apr, 16.30, Stevenson Lecture Theatre

This opening discussion, with Director of the British Museum Hartwig Fischer, Artistic Director of the Festival Daniel Kühnel and other guest speakers, examines the diplomatic role of Museums in the 21st century in promoting the values of tolerance, understanding, and a shared sense of history in a globalised age.

Free, booking essential

Exploring ritual music from the Temple of Attained Wisdom

Mon 23 Apr, 13.30

Ahead of a special performance in the Museum's Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery of China and South Asia, Curator Jessica Harrison-Hall and independent scholar Stephen Jones join monks

from the Zhi Hua temple ('Temple of Wisdom Attained') in Beijing to discuss the history and meaning of their religious instrumental and vocal music, which has accompanied Buddhist and Daoist rituals throughout northern China for centuries.

Free, booking essential

Polyrhythms in European avant-garde music and their African origins

Fri 27 Apr, 18.00, Stevenson Lecture Theatre

Musical compositions such as György Ligeti's etudes for solo piano were directly inspired by the polyrhythmic structures of

traditional African music. Before a special performance in the Museum's African Galleries, acclaimed South African composer and musician Eugene Skeef and international pianist Cathy Krier talk about 20th century European avant-garde music and its African origins.

Free, booking essential

Listening to others: gaining knowledge through music

Sun 29 Apr, 13.30, Stevenson Lecture Theatre

Since their birth in the Enlightenment, institutions such as the British Museum have been devoted to the ideal of gathering human knowledge. At this closing discussion, Artistic Director of the Festival Daniel Kühnel, and guest speakers explore this idea in the context of music, and the role of musical knowledge in a broader history of humanity.

Free, booking essential