

City of London Sinfonia joins the RSPB's campaign to celebrate birdsong through music in concert venues, hospitals, schools and day centres



3 May, 7:30pm
Sounds of the Outback
 Queen Elizabeth Hall

15 May, 7:30pm
Flocks of Europe
 Southwark Cathedral

24 May, 7:00pm
Translating Nature
 Queen Elizabeth Hall

In partnership with the **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds** and RSPB President **Miranda Krestovnikoff**, **City of London Sinfonia (CLS)** joins the call to celebrate birdsong in music. In their **Absolute Bird** spring concert series and wider social programme, CLS explores the wondrous sounds of nature at a time of growing environmental threats. Featuring diverse artists including vocalist and violinist **Alice Zawadzki**, recorder player **Genevieve Lacey**, folksinger **Sam Lee**, and conductors **Jessica Cottis** and **Sian Edwards**, the Absolute Bird series culminates in three concerts at the **Queen Elizabeth Hall** and **Southwark Cathedral** in **May 2019** celebrating 800 years of awe-inspiring music.



The Orchestra's London series supports the release of the RSPB's **Let Nature Sing** recording, a specially created track of pure birdsong highlighting the loss of 40 million wild birds and their calls from our skies. The charity is calling on the public to download, stream and share the single to indicate that they are passionate about nature's recovery, with the aspiration of entering the Charts. The track, to be released on **26 April**, was directed by **Sam Lee** who performs with CLS on **24 May**, and co-composed by **Bill Barclay**, who is currently touring *King of Ghosts* with CLS and Soumik Datta following their 2017 recording on Globe Music.

"Birdsong has been one of the biggest influences of English song, poetry and literature. The loss of it should concern us all, because it is a signal that all is not well in the world. We should see birdsong as a barometer for the health of the planet, and hence of ourselves."

- Sam Lee

Birdsong has long captured composers' imaginations in orchestral works from Baroque concertos to Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, which remains one of the most popular classical works played today. CLS musicians share a core belief that music has the power to transform people across all areas of society, and the themes of the Absolute Bird concert series resonate across the orchestra's regular residencies and programmes, including stimulating birdsong-inspired composition through partnerships in hospitals, hospices, specialist day centres, and schools.

"Birdsong has fascinated artists and musicians since time immemorial. Birds are nature's music. The warbles, tweets, screeches, trills, crows and whistles have informed our folklore, inspiring travelling troubadours and composers alike. Messiaen spent hours recording birdsong and then meticulously transcribing it. More recently with the wonders of modern technology, Hollis Taylor completely bypasses that process and integrates birdcalls straight into the music. Whether for mindfulness, education, rehabilitation or sheer pleasure, City of London Sinfonia celebrates the joyous sounds of nature in our concert series and more widely in our social programme."

- Matthew Swann, CLS Chief Executive

Friday 3 May, 7:30pm
Sounds of the Outback
Queen Elizabeth Hall

On **3 May**, conducted by **Jessica Cottis**, CLS showcases the exotic tunes of **Australian birdsong** with a diverse programme – **Sounds of the Outback** – at the **Queen Elizabeth Hall**, including excerpts from **Hollis Taylor's Absolute Bird series**, from which CLS's series takes its name.



Hollis Taylor, an Australian ornithologist and musician, uses field recordings at the heart of her compositions – or what Taylor terms as her re-compositions – which replicate the calls of various birds.

The **UK premiere** of Taylor's **Concerto for Recorder and Chamber Orchestra** is given by **Genevieve Lacey**, for whom the work was originally written. Recorders have long been associated with birdsong, with their similar sound and ability to imitate bird calls. Lacey also performs **Erkki Sven Tüür's Whistles and Whispers from Uluru**, a recorder concerto celebrating Australia's iconic natural landmark.

Wednesday 15 May, 7:30pm
Flocks of Europe
Southwark Cathedral

On **15 May**, the Orchestra presents **Flocks of Europe**, a programme of medieval to classical birdsong music in **Southwark Cathedral**, hosted by **Miranda Krestovnikoff**, who joins the Orchestra to guide the audience through the birds they are hearing. Besides her work in the RSPB and presenting BBC series such as *Coast* and *The One Show*, Miranda Krestovnikoff is a talented amateur musician.



At all their concerts in Southwark Cathedral (and in several other venues), the audience can choose to sit and lie informally on large cushions at the very front of the audience, experiencing the music as if from within. The audience is also free to move around during the concert, allowing them to appreciate the music and the striking cathedral building.

The concert begins with an interactive game of musical birdsong, with the audience using downloaded recordings of birdcalls to congregate in their own 'flock' around the Cathedral floor.

The programme opens with the anonymous ***Sumer is icumen in***, with its catchy 'Sing Cuckoo' refrain. First appearing in a 13th-century manuscript, the piece is one of the oldest extant polyphonic songs known. Cuckoos are also heard in this concert from **Daquin** to **Vivaldi's *Violin Concerto***, with soloist and director **Alexandra Wood**.

The whimsical calls of nightingales – rarely found in the UK any longer – are heard once again through Vivaldi and **Couperin's *Le Rossignol en Amour*** (The Nightingale in Love).

Hens, birds that Miranda Krestovnikoff keeps, are the third and final birds explored in the concert. **Haydn's *'Hen' Symphony*** gained its nickname after one theme reminded listeners of a hen's bobbing head, while **Rameau's *La Poule*** (The Hen) directly imitates the hen's cluck in its virtuosic outbursts.

**Friday 24 May, 7:00pm, 8:00pm,
10:00pm**
Translating Nature
Queen Elizabeth Hall

On **24 May**, City of London Sinfonia returns to the **Queen Elizabeth Hall**



with an evening in three parts – **Translating Nature**.

A pre-performance talk at **7:00pm** sees **Miranda Krestovnikoff** recount her experiences of creating musical conversations with wrens, joined **Huw Watkins** and **Roderick Chadwick**, who discuss classical composers' use of birdsong in their compositions.

At 8:00pm, CLS is joined by conductor **Sian Edwards** and pianist **Huw Watkins**, exploring composers' attempts to capture birdcalls, from painstaking transcriptions by French composer **Olivier Messiaen** to the free translations of three miniatures for piccolos and percussion from **Songbirdsongs** included by the American composer **John Luther Adams**.

Three short profiles by **Respighi** from his **The Birds** suite offer a 20th-century interpretation of Baroque attempts to capture birdsong in writing. For his profiles of a dove, a cuckoo, and a nightingale, Respighi turned to previous compositions by Jacques de Gallot, Pasquini, and the traditional folksong *Engels Nachtegaeltje*.

The programme ends with **Vaughan Williams' The Lark Ascending**. The enduring popularity of the work even in the digital age shows that we remain perennially fascinated by the natural music of birdsong.

The third event of the evening, **Singing with Nightingales Live**, is a special late-night performance at **10:00pm** with musicians from CLS joining folksinger and naturalist **Sam Lee** and vocalist and violinist **Alice Zawadzki** in an improvised set which responds to a live broadcast of nightingales singing in an ancient English woodland.

City of London Sinfonia has for over 30 years been revitalised by social engagement and aims to deliver creative music projects with possible clinical and educational advantages, also giving their musicians a renewed sense of music's worth beyond the concert platform.



From 2017 to 2020, City of London Sinfonia takes part in a three-year residency in the **Bethlem and Maudsley Hospital School**. The school is attended by pupils aged 4-19 who are resident and day patients at the psychiatric hospital. The young people present a broad range of mental health illnesses and come from across London and other areas of the UK.

CLS's artists and musicians work alongside students and staff to deliver a range of creative projects using instruments and technology that respond to the Orchestra's artistic programmes. In these projects, the young people's musical skills are developed through composition, singing, listening and performance, and they are provided with opportunities to

work together, express themselves and build confidence and self-esteem. This term, CLS leads sessions with the centre from **1 March**.

The current term's work, led by sound artist Gawain Hewitt, sees pupils responding to the music of birdsong and nature. The pieces they create are recorded and sampled to create an interactive sonic tree sculpture, with 24 interactive birds that perform the music composed in the residency. The tree will be displayed at the **Absolute Bird** series concerts at the **Queen Elizabeth Hall** and at **Southwark Cathedral** following the success of soundboards created as part of the 2018 Bach and the Cosmos Programme.



Members of **Headway East London**, the centre for survivors of brain injuries, will create their own sonic flotilla that will contain and perform music composed in response to the Absolute Bird repertoire during a five week project in March. The flotilla will form the shape of river birds and be launched on the canal that runs alongside the centre as part of Headway's Headway EATS event. CLS is involved in weekly sessions with the centre from **26 February**.

Patients at **St Christopher's Hospice** are drawing inspiration from bird-related classical repertoire including Couperin's *Le Rossinol en amour* and *Les coucous benevoles*, *Ah Poor Bird*, and excerpts of Stravinsky and Vivaldi as well as poetry and verse to create their own pieces.

Young pupils taking part in CLS's **Creative Primary School Projects** will also explore the Absolute Bird repertoire: working with children aged 5-7 (Key Stage 1) in Tower Hamlets and Harrow, the project aims to enthuse and inspire young people's interest in classical music by introducing them to orchestral instruments and repertoire through creative music-making and performance. Approximately 540 children, including some from some of London's most deprived areas, take part in the creative primaries projects each year and for many it is their first step towards musical learning and appreciation.

The Orchestra's **Comfortable Classical** series introduces live performances of classical music in a welcoming and relaxed concert environment for everyone, including those with autism, dementia, and sensory impairments. The three-concert sister programme to the Absolute Bird series brings complementary repertoire to The Albany, Deptford and Canada Water Theatre in February and March.



The lunchtime concerts include introductions from the musicians and feature carefully chosen repertoire inspired by nature and birdsong, including engaging works by Ligeti, Tabakova, and Milhaud. Audience members can sit on cushions, take part in relaxation activities such as drawing, colouring or knitting, and are able to use a designated quiet area if necessary.

Absolute Bird Listings

Friday 3 May, 7:30pm

Queen Elizabeth Hall

Sounds of the Outback

Hollis Taylor 'Voices' and 'Owen Springs reserve 2014' from *Absolute Bird*

Vivaldi Recorder Concerto in C major

Moondog *Birds of Paradise*

Erkki-Sven Tüür *Whistles and Whispers from Uluru* (recorder concerto)

Hollis Taylor 'Greens Park', 'Alice Springs: Gosse @ Sturt' and 'Hugh River' from *Absolute Bird*

Rebel *Les éléments*

Hollis Taylor *Absolute Bird* for recorder and chamber orchestra ^{UK}
PREMIERE

Genevieve Lacey recorder

Jessica Cottis conductor

Alexandra Wood director/violin
City of London Sinfonia

Wednesday 15 May, 7:30pm

Southwark Cathedral

Flocks of Europe

Anon *Sumer is Icumen In*

Daquin *The Cuckoo*

Janequin *Le Chant de Oiseaux*

Vivaldi *Violin Concerto in A Major, 'The Cuckoo'*

Couperin *Le Rossignol en Amour* (The Nightingale in Love)

Vivaldi 'La Primavera' from *Le quattro stagioni*

Couperin *Le Rossignol Vainqueur* (The Vanquished Nightingale)

Rameau *La Poule*

Haydn *Symphony no. 83, 'The Hen'*

Miranda Krestovnikoff

presenter

Alexandra Wood director/violin
City of London Sinfonia

Friday 24 May

Queen Elizabeth Hall

7:00pm: Pre-performance talk

With **Miranda Krestovnikoff**,
Huw Watkins, and **Roderick Chadwick**

8:00pm: Translating Nature

John Luther Adams

'Morningfieldsong' from
Songbirdsongs

Delius *On Hearing the first Cuckoo in Spring*

Respighi 'The Cuckoo' from *The Birds*

Messiaen *Le Merle Bleu* (Blue Rock Thrush)

Respighi 'The Dove' from *The Birds*

John Luther Adams

'Woodthrush' from *Songbirdsongs*

Respighi 'The Nightingale' from *The Birds*

Messiaen *L'alouette Calandrelle* (Greater Short-toad Lark)

John Luther Adams

'Meadowdance' from
Songbirdsongs

Vaughan Williams *The Lark
Ascending*

Alexandra Wood violin

Huw Watkins piano

Sian Edwards conductor

City of London Sinfonia

**10:00pm Singing with
Nightingales Live**

Alice Zawadzki vocalist/violin

Sam Lee vocalist/presenter

City of London Sinfonia

City of London Sinfonia



City of London Sinfonia (CLS) is the orchestral home to over 40 outstanding professional musicians who come together in the shared belief that music has the power to transform the lives of people across all areas of society.

The Orchestra places equal value on everything they do, whether performing in world-famous concert

halls and opera houses or sharing musical experiences with residents in care homes and hospitals. CLS brings a distinctive, 'seriously informal' style that removes the barriers between musicians and audiences, along with a warmth of music-making from musicians sharing a wider range of experiences together beyond the concert platform.

CLS gives over 75 performances every year, anywhere from an East London club to international concert halls and cathedrals; in its residencies at Opera Holland Park and St Paul's Cathedral; and in communities that because of location or opportunity would not otherwise experience outstanding professional music.

With Creative Director and Leader Alexandra Wood, CLS conceives and delivers imaginative performances and projects with associate artists, including skilled workshop leaders, musicians in classical, jazz, folk and contemporary music, and artists in film, dance or visual art – all of whom come to CLS to achieve ambitions they could not realise elsewhere. City of London Sinfonia collaborates with artists including Tony Adigun, Jessica Cottis, Soumik Datta, Brett Dean, Sian Edwards, Sam Lee and Roderick Williams.

In recent years, CLS has toured to Mexico, Japan and Ireland with classical performances in international concert halls and with education workshops and family concerts that introduce children to live orchestral music at an early age. The Orchestra also recorded with sarodist Soumik Datta in his innovative, reimagined score to *King of Ghosts* (Globe Music, 2017).

CLS's own artistic programmes, which influence their wellbeing and education projects, explore intriguing concepts often relating to science, history or philosophy, giving an extra dimension to performance and new music, and shedding new light on the familiar. Audiences can experience interactive and immersive performances that bring together music and the visual; the adventurous and the thought-provoking, enjoyed by many in the Orchestra's 2017 *Folk Tunes Tall Tales* and *Modern Mystics* concerts.

So far this Season, the Orchestra has performed with Roderick Williams OBE and Professor James Sparks in its *Bach and the Cosmos* London series and University Tour, exploring JS Bach's love of maths and numbers. In the Spring, CLS brings *Absolute Bird* to Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall (featuring Hollis Taylor's title UK premiere and live birdsong) and Southwark Cathedral (*Baroque Birdsong* with Miranda Krestovnikoff).

In the 2018-19 Season, CLS celebrates 30 years of transforming lives through music in its reputable Participation programme, which now reaches over 10,000 people across 150 days of music-making activities every year. The Orchestra continues to build upon its strengths in mainstream education, visiting schools where social background often creates a barrier to creativity and ambition, and in wellbeing, at hospitals for young people with severe physical or psychiatric conditions and with older people dealing with loss of loved ones and memory.

CLS's enterprising work in wellbeing settings has inspired them to pioneer *Mindful Music*, an innovative combination of live music and mindful meditation in which CLS musicians lead an experience that aims to improve mental health and wellbeing in the workplace, in performances and elsewhere.

cls.co.uk

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