

Press Release

For release: 21 March 2017



Thomas Adès launches three-year Britten Sinfonia Beethoven Symphony Cycle

Beethoven's symphonies performed alongside works by Gerald Barry

Beethoven Symphonies 1 & 2 and Barry's *Beethoven*

Friday 26 May at 7.30pm, Norwich St Andrew's Hall

Saturday 27 May at 7.30pm, Saffron Hall

Friday 2 June at 7.30pm, Barbican Hall

Beethoven Symphony 3 and Barry's *Chevaux de Frise*

Tuesday 6 June at 7.30pm, Barbican Hall

Chamber music by Adès, Barry and Beethoven

Tuesday 30 May, Milton Court Concert Hall, London

"We haven't got to the end of what Beethoven has to say to us." Thomas Adès

Thomas Adès conducts **Britten Sinfonia** in the opening concerts of a three-year **Beethoven Symphony Cycle**, with Beethoven's music interleaved with the wondrously idiosyncratic music of **Gerald Barry**. The Cycle begins with Beethoven's first three symphonies, alongside Barry's *Beethoven* (a setting of Beethoven's letter to the 'Immortal Beloved') and orchestral work, *Chevaux de Frise*. The launch of the Cycle is also marked by a programme of chamber music at Milton Court Concert Hall, London that juxtaposes works by both composers that are small in scale but large in ambition. Britten Sinfonia's Beethoven Symphony Cycle will be heard in its entirety at the Barbican, London, where the orchestra is an Associate Ensemble, with selected concerts at St Andrew's Hall Norwich, and Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden, where Britten Sinfonia is Resident Orchestra.

Ludwig van Beethoven was music's ultimate revolutionary, whilst Gerald Barry smashes every rule of new music. Thomas Adès comments: *"Gerald once described Beethoven to me as the greatest man who ever lived; many of his pieces are explicitly about Beethoven, and others secretly about him or have Beethovenian aspects. There are parallels in their music in the way that each has invented something quite new, not worrying entirely about every single moment but thinking about the whole experience of the rhythmic as an expanse in time. This is earthy, visceral music. Beethoven put his art first – he was not an everyday kind of person – and neither is Gerald."*

The opening concert of Adès's Beethoven Symphony cycle with Britten Sinfonia pairs Beethoven's witty first symphony with the virtuosic second, complemented by Gerald Barry's powerful setting of Beethoven's love letter to his 'immortal beloved' (which was found, unopened, following the composer's death), with soloist, baritone **Mark Stone**. Barry describes Beethoven's letter as an outpouring of emotion on *"a profound, dramatic event"* that goes to the *"core of Beethoven... which seems like a good place to begin"*. The concert can be heard in Norwich, Saffron Walden and at the Barbican in London.

The symphony that changed everything and kick-started the Romantic period in music is the focus of the second concert in Thomas Adès's Beethoven cycle at the Barbican. Adès pairs the *Eroica* symphony with Gerald Barry's orchestral masterpiece, *Chevaux de Frise*. A fearsome and fearless tour de force that fittingly takes its name from the barrier of spikes designed to defend against cavalry charges in the 17th century, the work was commissioned by and premiered at the BBC Proms in 1988. Barry describes it as having "a weight and a lightness, and ecstatic feverish qualities".

As a prelude to the Beethoven Symphony Cycle at the Barbican, both Thomas Adès and Gerald Barry perform Barry's *Five Chorales from the Intelligence Park* for two pianos, an arrangement/deconstruction of five chorales from Barry's first opera. They appear together as part of a concert of chamber music by Barry and Beethoven, which also features Beethoven's *Septet* and Adès in Beethoven's *Piano Trio in E flat Op 70, No 2*.

Thomas Adès is no stranger to Britten Sinfonia. He recently conducted the orchestra in the UK premiere of Barry's latest opera, *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* at the Barbican in November 2016, in a performance of Beethoven's 8th Symphony at the 2016 BBC Proms and as both conductor and composer for the orchestra's US debut at Lincoln Center, New York in 2011.

Further press information from: Sophie Cohen on 020 7482 3466 (note: new number) 07711 551 787 sophiecohen@blueyonder.co.uk

Box office and Booking Details

ST ANDREW'S HALL, NORWICH

Beethoven Symphonies 1 & 2 and Barry's *Beethoven*

Friday 26 May at 7.30pm

Part of the Norfolk and Norwich Festival

£6-£30

www.brittensinfonia.com

SAFFRON HALL, SAFFRON WALDEN

Beethoven Symphonies 1 & 2 and Barry's *Beethoven*

Saturday 27 May at 7.30pm

£10-£35 (£6 concessions for FT students and under 18s)

Box Office: 0845 548 7650

www.saffronhall.com

THE BARBICAN

Chamber music by Adès, Barry and Beethoven

Tuesday 30 May, Milton Court Concert Hall, London

£15-£30 (*produced by The Barbican*)

Beethoven Symphonies 1 & 2 and Barry's *Beethoven*

Friday 2 June at 7.30pm, Barbican Hall

Beethoven Symphony 3 and Barry's *Chevaux de Frise*

Tuesday 6 June at 7.30pm, Barbican Hall

£10-£35

Box Office: 020 7638 8891 www.barbican.org.uk