

# SOUTHBANK CENTRE

## Daniel Hyde: Bach, Mozart & Debussy

Tuesday 27 January 2026, 7pm  
Royal Festival Hall

We are proud to be a place where people come together to discover and connect with the wonder of classical music. Throughout the year, we provide unrivalled opportunities to encounter, live in person, the full range of music, and a variety of different ways for you to experience it.

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Toks Dada, Head of Classical Music, Southbank Centre

### Repertoire

Bach Prelude and Fugue in C, BWV.547

10'

Mozart Fantasia in F minor, K.608

11'

Debussy Petite Suite arr. Roques

14'

Errollyn Wallen *Belvedere* (World premiere)

3'

Interval

Alain 3 Danses

24'

Durufié Prelude, adagio et choral varié sur le thème du Veni Creator, Op.4

22'

### Performer

Daniel Hyde *organ*

Three major French works dominate tonight's concert. From the nuance and suggestion of Debussy's exquisite *Petite Suite* transcribed for organ, to Eastern influences in Jehan Alain's striking *Trois Danses* and Gregorian modalism of Durufié's *Prelude, Adagio and Chorale Variations on Veni Creator Spiritus*, each work treats the organ as an orchestra, where colour, variety and transparency are paramount. Earlier in the concert, we hear the counterpoint of Mozart's *Fantasia in F minor, K.608*. Originally written for musical clock, this piece has found its natural home as a piece for the colours of the organ – another transcription of sorts.

The concert opens with the earlier counterpoint of the *Prelude and Fugue in C, BWV.547*, by Johann Sebastian Bach. Born into a great musical dynasty in central Germany of more than 50 musicians and composers, Johann Sebastian was by far its most gifted member and, for many, remains the greatest composer to have ever lived. In the *Prelude*, Bach draws out music of every possible permutation from two simple ingredients: a lilting, ascending scale in the hands and an answering downwards arpeggio in the pedals. Bach creates a large scale form of supremely satisfying proportions, which is followed by a *Fugue* comprising similar compositional wizardry. Bach's masterstroke here is to save the pedals until the very last moment possible, the majority of the writing being for the hands alone. When the pedals do finally enter, they play the *Fugue* subject but in augmentation, where the theme is heard elongated in long notes. The *Fugue* finishes with a series of declamatory chords which recall the music of the *Prelude*.

Mozart famously declared the organ to be 'the king of instruments', but wrote little for the instrument himself. His *Fantasia in F minor, K.608*, was written in open score, lending itself ideally to transcription, and is now considered as Mozart's most notable work for the organ. On the one hand, the *Fantasia* looks back to a Baroque sensibility and the counterpoint of Bach, with its opening and closing sections comprising striking declamatory chords and fugal passages. On the other, the *Fantasia's* beating heart is its classically proportioned, orchestrally conceived middle section, in theme and variation form. (It is hard not to imagine this passage as

Errollyn Wallen's *Belvedere* was a commission paid for by the Organ Club on the occasion of their centenary.

*This performance lasts approximately 2 hours.  
There is a 20-minute interval.*

music for orchestral wind instruments.) The work's final passage ingeniously combines Mozart's various musical themes, closing with a sense of ferocious energy.

Debussy wrote his *Petite Suite* in 1888, fresh after his return to Paris from an extended residency at the Villa de Medici in Rome, as winner of the coveted Prix de Rome. The work is scored for piano four hands, and the composer gave the first performance in 1889 with the music publisher Jacques Durand. It was an immediate hit, and, given its relatively modest technical demands, and was taken up by a wide range of amateur players. Present in the audience at the premiere was Debussy's colleague Henri Büsser, who later made a transcription of the work for orchestra – which has arguably become as well known as the original. Tonight's transcription of the Suite for organ is by Léon Roques, dating from the early 20th century.

The first two movements of the Suite take inspiration from two poems of Paul Verlaine's 1869 volume *Fêtes galantes* which evoke 18th-century aristocrats on country escapades. *En bateau* (Sailing) perfectly captures a sense of waterborne languorous serenity. *Cortège* (Retinue), conveys Verlaine's playfulness – in the poem, a lady and her escort of a monkey and pageboy retire upstairs.

The Suite's final two movements, *Menuet* and *Ballet*, evoke the sense of shimmering nostalgia of Verlaine's *Fêtes galantes* without being based on specific poems.

Tonight's concert also features the first performance of a work written by Belize-born British composer Errollyn Wallen, Master of the King's Music, to mark and celebrate the centenary year of The Organ Club. Wallen writes: 'I wanted to compose a work which would give the performer the opportunity to make full use of colours and registration available to them.' *Belvedere* is a declamatory fanfare which certainly fulfils the composer's own brief; celebratory chords are set against a moto perpetuo of running oscillations, scales and arpeggios throughout. The pedals are conspicuous by their absence throughout much of the work, lending a heightened sense of drama to the energy of the writing for the hands.

Jehan Alain's life was cut short during the last stages of the Battle of France in 1940, when he was aged just 29. He had shown exceptional promise as a young composer and organist, and, despite his early death, he left behind an impressive and imaginative group of works for the organ. Written in 1937, the *Trois Danses* are perhaps his masterpiece, and embody Alain's own narrative of the dance: life and death, movement and stasis, joy and suffering.

*Joies*: The movement opens with a chordal introduction with an Eastern musical flavour. The principle dance theme soon appears, and grows into an ecstatic ritualistic dance of joy. The movement comes to a quiet close, acting as a premonition for the second movement.

*Deuils*: This is the longest movement of the three. The unbridled energy of the opening movement is transformed here into a

*marche funebre* – a funeral cortège. In fact Alain subtitled this movement 'Funeral Dance, to honour a heroic memory'.

*Luttes*: Alain gradually brings us back to the dance rhythms of the opening movement with the addition of the chords from the very opening introduction. This final movement is a tussle between two opposing forces, a ghoulish dance of life and death. The concluding strains bring the conflict to a brutal head, resolved by two unexpected and abrupt chords, leaving us to wonder who has in fact won the battle. The victory this suggests is fragile and, at best, temporary.

Duruflé's exquisite compositional language is impressionistic in its own unique way. Textures arise from a sense of extreme precision in the musical writing – there are no superfluous notes here. Duruflé was also exacting in his registration directions to the player – this is deeply considered orchestration for the organ. Plainsong made an indelible impression on Duruflé, and weaves its way through his surprisingly small and immaculately crafted oeuvre, most overtly in his *Requiem* and the *Prelude, Adagio and Variations on Veni Creator* heard tonight. Veni Creator Spiritus is the plainsong hymn for Pentecost – the Christian feast commemorating the dramatic descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Disciples of Christ. Most of the piece only hints at the plainsong melody; the music of the first two of three contiguous movements use only fragments of the chant. Duruflé makes us wait until the final Variations to experience the full melody in all its glory, after the thrilling crescendo of the Adagio.

The Prelude opens with flute stops spinning a fine web-lattice of sound. A contorted version of the plainsong is heard on the Hautbois and then on the Crumhorne stops, before the fluttering comes to a close with a plaintive chordal meditation set for a lone flûte stop. The Adagio may well be Duruflé's finest music for the organ. A recitative for the trompette stop leads into sumptuous chordal writing for the voix célestes and voix humaine. The music becomes increasingly chromatic and builds to a seamless climax, leading into the concluding variations. The variations are unmistakably derived from surviving classical examples, particularly those of De Grigny, in which the organ played alternate verses of the hymn, the remaining verses being sung by the Choir or Congregation. Had Duruflé given his variations classical titles they would probably have been: *Plein Jeu, Dialogue sur les Cromorne et le Nazard, Duo, Fond d'Orgue* and *Grand Jeu*. This final *Grand Jeu* is here transformed into a dramatic toccata in which Duruflé concludes the work with an ecstatic presentation of the theme and final Amen.

**Programme notes © James McVinnie, 2026**

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