

## David Owen Norris – Best of British, part two

**Saturday May 25th**

10.30am – 11.30am

Ludlow Assembly Rooms

**James MacMillan**

*Variations on a theme of Henry Purcell*

**William Mathias****Michael Berkeley**

**Bax**

*Second Sonata*

**Elgar**

*Improvisations towards a Piano Concerto*

**Madeleine Dring**

*Fantasy-Sonata*

*Waltz Finale*

*Programme shown may be changed without notice*



**David Owen Norris** is a pianist, composer and broadcaster who has performed all across the world, with many appearances in the BBC Proms, and concert tours of Europe, Australia and North America. He has a discography of 60 CDs including his own Piano Concerto with the BBC Concert Orchestra, and his oratorio Prayerbook. His other compositions include a Symphony, the oratorio *Turning Points*, and the multi-media tribute to the passing seasons, *HengeMusic*.

His *Perfect Pianists* is often repeated on BBC4. His *Chord of the Week* programmes on BBC2 television were a popular feature of the Proms for six years. He has contributed to programmes on Parry, Vaughan Williams, Mendelssohn, Elgar & Tippett. The Beethoven 9 app for which he wrote the book and the analyses won the Best Music App Award. His many radio presentations include: *Playlist* on Radio 4, and *In Tune* and *The Works* on Radio 3. He made his 34<sup>th</sup> appearance on *Building a Library* in April comparing recordings of Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony*.

Recordings recently released include Mozart on fortepiano for Hyperion, featured in the *New York Times*, the complete Chamber Music of Grace Williams, which was a *Guardian* CD of the Week, and the complete songs of Sir Arthur Sullivan on Chandos

## Programme notes

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Great composers in Britain have not made the piano their own in the way of a Chopin, a Schumann, or a Messiaen. But they have often used the instrument as a light to shine into the private depths of their minds, and with a few clues thrown in from a lifetime's experience, you can share some of their profoundest thoughts.

### **James MacMillan, William Mathias, Michael Berkeley** - *Variations on a theme of Henry Purcell*

The *Purcell Variations* were composed for the Kennedy Center (in 1991) as a contribution from the British Isles to a Gala Recital on the anniversary of the assassination of JFK. They were played by David Owen Norris.

### **Sir Arnold Bax (1883-1953)** - *Second Sonata*

Bax was Master of the King's Music, both English millionaire and penniless revolutionary Irish poet, composer of *Tintagel* and of seven symphonies. His dark *Second Sonata* reflects on the Easter Rising of 1916, in which he lost many Irish friends, and which swept away his schizophrenic dual identity: one and the same man was banned by the censor during World War One (O'Byrne's poetry was openly republican) and appointed Master of the King's Music during World War Two.

This Sonata is variously described as 'the best single-movement sonata since Liszt' (Rachmaninoff/Schnabel) and a 'struggle between good & evil' (Harriet Cohen and many others).

### **Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934)** - *Improvisations towards a Piano Concerto*

David Owen Norris traces how Elgar's piano improvisations, recorded in 1929, could lead on to the great Piano Concerto that was in his mind.

### **Madeleine Dring (1923-1977)** – *Fantasy Sonata, Waltz Finale*

A singer, actress, pupil of Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells, and composer of the evergreen *Five Betjeman Songs*, Madeleine Dring's ebullient *Fantasy-Sonata* is somewhat in the mode of Richard Addinsell's *Warsaw Concerto*.

The *Waltz Finale* is the fourth movement of her *Dance Suite* for piano.

