

CLASSICAL CLUB

Stravinsky: The Soldier's Tale

London Mozart Players
Tama Matheson: narrator
William Vann: conductor



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Stravinsky: The Soldier's Tale

Broadcast at 3pm, Remembrance
Sunday 8 November. Filmed at the
Wren Chapel, Royal Hospital Chelsea.

Stravinsky: The Soldier's Tale

London Mozart Players

Tama Matheson: narrator

William Vann: conductor

Simon Blendis – violin

Benjamin Russell – double bass

Tim Lines – clarinet

Sarah Burnett – bassoon

Alan Thomas – trumpet

Andrew Cole – trombone

Scott Bywater – percussion

Keep in touch!

If you have enjoyed this concert and would like to hear more about the London Mozart Players then do sign up for our newsletter via our website.

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Programme notes

Igor Stravinsky The Soldier's Tale

1. The Soldier's March
2. Airs by a Stream
3. Pastorale
4. Royal March
5. The Little Concert
6. Three Dances: Tango – Waltz – Ragtime
7. Dance of the Devil
8. Grand Choral
9. Triumphal March of the Devil

Pandemic cancels tour!

The Soldier's Tale is a morality play, based on the Russian folk story 'The Runaway Soldier and the Devil' with original text (in French) by the Swiss writer C.F. Ramuz. In 1918 with Europe economically ruined by the First World War, Stravinsky was marooned in Switzerland, unable to get income from his Russian estates or publisher but he did find support from the Swiss philanthropist, Werner Reinhart, to write *The Soldiers Tale*. The première took place in Lausanne, but a subsequent tour had to be cancelled due to the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic. It was not until 1924 that this theatrical work was performed again in a fully staged production by Diaghilev. We are so pleased to be able to give this performance in 2020, in spite of the restrictions brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Stravinsky and Ramuz always intended that *The Soldier's Tale* could be performed either as a concert suite for instrumental ensemble, independent of the text, or as a fully staged event with narrator, actors and dancers. Stravinsky also arranged the suite for piano solo and separately for a trio consisting of piano, violin and clarinet. Today you will hear *The Soldier's Tale* with instrumental septet with narrator, Tama Matheson.

 **Solo piano version**
click to play

 **Trio version**
click to play

In order to maximise the possibilities for performance when money was scarce, Stravinsky wrote for a small group of players representing the different families of instruments: violin and double bass, clarinet and bassoon, trumpet and trombone plus percussion. As a double bass player excluded from most pieces of string chamber music, I can't help myself loving any work for chamber ensemble which includes double bass. However, even without that lure I find this piece at once entertaining, ingenious and thought-provoking.

A soldier is walking down a lonely road and stops to play his violin. He is overheard by the Devil who approaches him and asks for the violin in return for a book that will make him immensely rich. The soldier agrees and even though the exchange of violin and book is supposed to be for three days, it is a

full three years later that the soldier returns to his village. The villagers consider him to be a ghost, the devil reappears, in disguise, to sell the violin back to him – but it no longer plays. The soldier’s soul had been inextricably bound to the violin and was sold with it. In despair, the soldier throws the violin away and tears up the book.

In the second part the soldier manages to break the hold the Devil has over him by losing all his money in a game of cards. He also awakens a sleeping princess by playing his violin and is given her hand in marriage. But the Devil tricks the soldier again by telling him he will once more take his soul if he leaves the castle grounds. The soldier can’t resist the idea of finding his mother and sharing his princess wife and his new found wealth and starts off on his fated



Classical Club unpacked

Violinist Simon Blendis introduces *The Soldier’s Tale*.

Click the play icon above or visit londonmozartplayers.com/classicalclub-concert-programmes to watch.

journey. The Devil takes his bride away and the soldier’s greed becomes the reason for his ultimate downfall.

Stravinsky was a game changer in classical music. His music broke the mould of the late Romantic progression of classical music towards harmonic chromaticism. Instead its impact depends on ritualistic rhythm and repetitive rhythmic cells, particularly evident in works like *The Rite of Spring* and in the constant rhythmic ostinato present for much of *The Soldier’s Tale*. It is the double bass that provides the ostinato or regular heartbeat for much of the piece and Stravinsky evokes the sense of a tug-of-war between ostinato and melody that reflects the conflict in the story. Sometimes this musical conflict creates a dislocated effect, giving the impression the heart has just missed a beat. No wonder I have heard comments like this from colleagues: ‘When I look at the music on the stand, it doesn’t look anything like the way the music sounds...’ or ‘The whole time I feel like I am putting everyone else off...! It demands a huge amount of concentration from everyone not to miss a beat in the wrong place!

The Rite of Spring
click to play

Stravinsky conducts the opening Soldier’s March
click to play

Stravinsky was also influenced by the emergence of jazz with its rhythmic energy and modal melody. The instrumentation for *The Soldier’s Tale* is even reminiscent of a New Orleans jazz ensemble. However, the melodies are not at all modal or folk-

like. In the Royal March there are snippets of early nineteenth century opera and some elaborate melodic figuration typical of European high art. Later in the piece Stravinsky makes a more overt nod to contemporary popular music with a Tango, Waltz and Ragtime.

Ragtime
click to play

The Grand Chorale (listen from 1’20”), which forms part of the Devil’s final dance, is anything but a Chorale in the traditional sense. From Bach we would expect intertwining melodic lines producing a harmonic line of tension and resolution. Instead Stravinsky uses some of those

same chords but without the resolutions, so leaving us with a perpetual sense of suspense and unease. Might we too be greedy and fall foul of the Devil?

The Grand Chorale
click to play

If you would like to know more about *The Soldier’s Tale*, a good place to start is to hear Samuel West and Charles Hazlewood discuss the work.

Samuel West and Charles Hazlewood
click to play

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Michael Collins: Clarinet at the Clock Tower

Weber: Clarinet Quintet in B \flat Major, Op.34
Mozart: Clarinet Quintet in A Major, K.581

Watch online from 7pm on Thursday 1 October

The Royal Hospital

The Royal Hospital Chelsea was designed by Sir Christopher Wren, who brought to life King Charles II's vision of a home for veteran soldiers. Until the seventeenth century, the state made no provision for old and injured soldiers, and with the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1540s and beyond, there had been fewer religious houses to take on this duty of care. In 1681 Charles II issued a royal warrant authorising the building of the Royal Hospital in the Chelsea countryside (as it then was), and Wren was charged with the design and build. The first 'Chelsea Pensioners' were admitted in 1692, and there is still a full complement of Pensioners to this

day, recognisable in their red uniforms, who have all served as ordinary soldiers in the Armed Forces at some point in their lives. Our concert takes place in The Wren Chapel, built between 1681 and 1687, a rare example of Wren's pure ecclesiastical work. Director of Music William Vann takes the baton for this concert.

We hoped you enjoyed this performance in the beautiful surroundings of the Royal Hospital Chelsea. Please do consider supporting the Royal Hospital and the exceptional care they provide to our nation's veterans – you can find more information on their website: chelsea-pensioners.co.uk.





The London Mozart Players, the UK's longest established chamber orchestra, was founded in 1949 by Harry Blech to delight audiences with the works of Mozart and Haydn. The orchestra is known for its unmistakable British roots. Over the last seventy years, the LMP has developed an outstanding reputation for adventurous, ambitious programming from Baroque through to genre-crossing contemporary music, and continues to build on its long history of association with many of the world's finest artists including Sir James Galway, Dame Felicity Lott, Jane Glover, Howard Shelley, Nicola Benedetti, James Ehnes, John Suchet and Simon Callow. The orchestra enjoys an international reputation, touring extensively throughout Europe and the Far East, most recently Dubai and Hong Kong, and records frequently for Naxos, Chandos, CPO, Signum and Hyperion Records.

The London Mozart Players has remained active throughout the pandemic. Not only was this player-led chamber orchestra the first ensemble to offer daily unique online content throughout lockdown with 'At Home with LMP' (225,000+ views), it was also the first UK orchestra to perform after restrictions were lifted in mid-June, with their LMP Live! concert series with Tasmin Little and Jennifer Pike attracting an audience of over 1 million via Classic

FM's social media channels. And now LMP is in the vanguard of UK orchestras testing the waters with paid-for online orchestral concerts to support their musicians, rather than relying on donations.

If you have enjoyed this performance, please go online and find out more about LMP's Classical Club: eight concerts filmed in unusual or iconic venues in front of socially-distanced audiences and streamed online via a password-protected broadcast platform. You can buy an eight-concert 'Season Pass' for £60. Concerts will be available to view on demand up until 1 December.

LMP has partnered with Scala Radio, who will promote this exciting series, and they'll also be hosting extra content via their website.

Tama Matheson



Tama Matheson is a writer, director, and actor with a passion for combining the spoken word with music. In his career, Tama has always straddled the musical and theatrical worlds, and, for many years, cherished a desire to unify these two theatrical realms into a single creation. As such, he set up the company, Word and Music, in order to fulfil that desire.

Tama has directed opera and theatre all over the world. As an opera director, he has worked at the Sydney Opera House, Oper Graz, Houston Grand Opera, Melbourne Opera, Perth Opera, JACC Kuwait, and the Teatru Manoel in Malta. He has also collaborated with several orchestras, including Melbourne, Tasmanian, and Queensland Symphony Orchestras, the Brisbane Camerata, and the London Mozart Players.

William Vann



William is the founder and Artistic Director of the London English Song Festival and the Director of Music at the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

Born in Bedford, he was a Chorister at King's College, Cambridge and a Music Scholar at Bedford School. He subsequently read law and took up a choral scholarship at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he was taught the piano by Peter Uppard, and studied piano accompaniment at the Royal Academy of Music with Malcolm Martineau and Colin Stone.

Become an LMP Friend

Our wonderful LMP Friends are a vibrant community of music lovers who receive exclusive benefits and association with the orchestra and its musicians, whilst helping to support the future of the London Mozart Players.

For an annual fee, our Friends enjoy a range of benefits including exclusive access to the players, discounted tickets, special events and free programmes. For example, LMP Friends are able to purchase a Classical Club 8-concert pass for just £36.

We have various membership packages available, starting from £60 (£100 for a couple) and you can join via our website: londonmozartplayers.com/lmp-friends



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A Classical Celebration!

Prokofiev: Classical Symphony
Schumann: Cello Concerto

Maciej Kulakowski: cello

Watch online right now!



Donate to support

This online 8-concert series is LMP's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. When lockdown began in March 2020, all the orchestra's live music, recordings and education events were cancelled, along with all the related income. LMP immediately went online to share its music and daily unique content for free through initiatives like 'At Home with LMP' and 'LMP Live!' which attracted more than 1.3 million views. You can still enjoy this content via our YouTube channel.

LMP's Classical Club was launched behind a paywall to try to recoup revenue lost throughout 2020, and to ensure that as one of Britain's finest chamber orchestras, we will be ready to face a new future.

As an unfunded orchestra, we rely on the generous donations of our audiences, patrons and donors as well as ticket sales. These funds help support our community work, build inspiring partnerships, as well as helping us to protect the livelihoods and mental wellbeing of musicians and staff, all of whom have been greatly impacted at this time.



Whilst concert hall doors may be closed, we are determined to continue bringing world-class music to as wide an audience as possible. By making a donation today, you can help ensure that our work can continue both now, and in the future.

Thank you.

londonmozartplayers.com/donate-now

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A Classical Celebration!

Venue: St John the Evangelist
Prokofiev Symphony No. 1, 'Classical' Op.25
Schumann Cello Concerto in A minor, Op.129
Maciej Kulakowski cello

Michael Collins: Clarinet at the Clock Tower

Venue: St Pancras Clock Tower
Weber Clarinet Quintet in B-flat major, Op.34
Mozart Clarinet Quintet in A major, K.581
Michael Collins clarinet

Façade at Freemasons' Hall

Venue: Freemasons' Hall
Walton Façade: An Entertainment
Samuel West narrator
Benjamin Pope conductor

Coming soon

Celebrating Beethoven

Venue: St John's Smith Square
Beethoven Coriolan Overture, Op.62
Beethoven Violin Concerto in D major, Op.61
Jonian Ilias Kadesha violin (YCAT soloist)

Children's Concert – Little Red Riding Hood

Venue: The Great Conservatory, Syon Park
Patterson/Dahl Little Red Riding Hood
Polly Ives narrator

Children's Concert – The Three Little Pigs

Venue: The Great Conservatory, Syon Park
Patterson/Dahl The Three Little Pigs
Polly Ives narrator

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Façade at Freemasons' Hall

Walton: Façade:
An Entertainment

Samuel West: narrator
Ben Pope: conductor

Watch online from 7pm
on Thursday 8 October

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CLASSICAL CLUB

Little Red Riding Hood

Paul Patterson: music
Roald Dahl: words

Polly Ives: narrator

Watch online from 10am
on Thursday 29 October

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MARK KERMODE
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