

# MUSIC PROGRAMME INTRODUCTION

One important aspect of this evening's programme of music is that it has been chosen to mirror the extraordinary range and variety of cultural heritage work which Europa Nostra has been involved in over so many years. Seven pieces of music from seven different countries and nine different musical traditions are performed by musicians from Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia and Spain.

The other important aspect is a reading, a respect for, and a sonic reflection of the space of the extraordinary Thessaloniki Rotunda in which the music takes place. The eclectic nature of this building as well as its unusual spatial structure is used by the musicians in order to first deconstruct and then recreate the idea of a Western music stage. So this is not a 'concert' in the usual sense, but rather a 20-minute musical journey. Each separate piece of music is short in duration; ranging from one to five minutes long, the individual pieces will be played one after the other as a single sequence of movements, without break or applause between any of the individual pieces. In such a way we seek to reflect the values of The **Empress Theophano Prize Ceremony**, the **Thessaloniki Rotunda** heritage space in which the prize award takes place, and **Europa Nostra**, the esteemed and respected prizewinners.

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## **PHANFÁRA – A fanfare Introduction**

### ***Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) Fanfare for St Edmundsbury***

Written in 1959 by the British composer Benjamin Britten for performance at St. Edmundsbury Cathedral in Bury St. Edmunds in the East of England. Each trumpet player plays one solo verse in turn. Interestingly each verse is very different from the next, and together they can initially give a sense of chaos - an effect which is likely to be amplified by the acoustic of the Rotunda - but as the piece progresses, it gradually dawns on the listener that unity is emerging from this chaos. As the different lines settle and overlap, by the end unity is indeed achieved, thereby calling the audience to attention, and setting the scene for the music that follows.

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## **ENTHUMÉOMAI – Considering**

### ***Claude Debussy (1862-1918) Syrinx for Solo Flute, L. 129***

*Syrinx* was written by Debussy in 1913, the year of Benjamin Britten's birth. Utterly haunting and timeless, it was written as incidental music for the play 'Psyche', and evokes the idea of Pan's pipes through the enchanted sound of the modern flute. The myth plays out Pan's pursuit of the nymph Syrinx, with whom he has fallen in love. His love is not returned, and in the way of things, Syrinx turns herself into a water reed in order to hide from him in the marshes. Pan cuts reeds to make his pipes, in turn accidentally killing his beloved. It is said to be the first solo composition for the modern flute and has become one of the most famous pieces for that instrument.

### ***Luciano Berio (1925- 2003) Duets for Two Violins: 1. Béla & 31. Mauricio***

2025 is the 100th anniversary of the birth of one of Italy's most eminent composers of the last century, Luciano Berio. The 34 duos were inspired by the Bartók duos set, two of which we will hear later in this programme, and which were written between 1979 and 1983. Intended partly for school violin teaching, each duet focuses on one or two musical and/or technical challenges and whereas the Bartók pieces refer in their titles to folk music, each of Berio's duos make reference in their title and in the music, to his musical friends, mostly composers. In this case we hear Béla -referring to the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók- and Mauricio, representing the composer, Mauricio Kagel. Kagel was born in Buenos Aires from a Jewish family of German and Russian origins. Béla challenges the players by employing different manners of sound production, such as *sul ponticello* (placing the bow near the bridge of the violin giving a nasal sound) and *sul tasto* (placing the bow far away from the bridge to give an opposite covered sound). In Mauricio, there is a highly complex palindromic setting of notes with a repetition crossing into complex distorted harmonic intervals.

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## **Sofia Gubaidulina (1931 - 2025) Ten Preludes for Solo Cello: I. staccato – legato**

“As the descendant of Tatar Muslim and Russian Orthodox Christian forebears, Sofia Gubaidulina’s upbringing was divided between two cultures. Her compositions, like her life story, create intersections between seemingly disparate pairings: classical and folk instruments, consonance and dissonance, mathematical objectivity and mystical spirituality. For her, the idea of crossing represents the crucifix, and is symbolic of her Christian faith. The pairing of opposites is a structural as well as a spiritual feature of her language.” [from Notes for Cellists, Miranda Wilson, Oxford University Press]. In the first Prelude that pairing is between short and long notes (‘staccato’ and ‘legato’ in Italian). But the magic is how in using this simple opposition, Gubaidulina (who died earlier this year on 25 March at the age of 93) creates, in hardly more than one minute of music for one instrument, a spiritual centring and balance which serves as the perfect central moment for this programme: around 80 seconds of perfect focus.

## **Béla Bartók (1881-1945) 44 Duos for Two Violins: I. Párosító (Teasing Song) & 44. Erdélyi tánc (Transylvanian Dance – Ardeliana)**

In the same way as Berio’s duos for two violins, these duos were intended by Bartók more as a work for young students than as concert pieces. Aside from his many major compositions, Bartók devoted much of his life to travelling around his native Hungary and adjoining countries and cultures in order to discover and transcribe folk music from many parts of Europe, and indeed all of the 44 pieces are based on folk music from different parts of Eastern Europe. This is clearly evident from the musical style and language of both of these pieces, although whilst the geographical origins of the *Transylvanian Dance* is obvious, with the *Teasing Song*, this is less so.

## **Sokratis Sinopoulos (1974 -) Improvisation, Echoes of Byzantium for lyra**

Greek musician Sokratis Sinopoulos was born in Athens in 1974 and studied Byzantine music and classical guitar as a child, beginning his studies of the lyra -an early bowed instrument that dates back to the Byzantine era- in 1988. His virtuosity and improvisatory brilliance have been recognised worldwide. In 1999 he was awarded the Melina Mercuri Award for young artists and he has since collaborated with a variety of musicians worldwide. He is currently assistant Professor at the Department of Music Science and Art at the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki. Tonight he performs an improvisatory bridge, linking the cross-cultural European musical patterns of the previous pieces in this programme to the final piece we are to hear, as we move from the varied heritage folk, world, contemporary and indigenous styles to celebrate the work of Europa Nostra with a movement of music from the very heart of the great European musical canon and tradition.

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## **EORTASMÓS – Celebration**

**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

### **Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major, BWV. 1048: I. (Allegro)**

Probably written between 1713 and 1721, the six Brandenburg concertos, dedicated to The Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg, are undoubtedly one of the greatest sets of concertos in the classical music repertoire. Each is written for a different combination of instruments, and as the Bach scholar Christoph Wolff has noted, “the modest title of these Concertos does not begin to suggest the degree of innovation exhibited in the daring combinations... Every one of the six concertos set a precedent in its scoring, and every one was to remain without parallel.”

The Third Concerto is written for the highly unusual combination of 3 violins, 3 violas, 3 cellos and a base line. Interestingly there is no distinction between solo and ensemble instruments -every instrument apart from the bass plays both a solo and a tutti (everyone together) part at different times. The first movement which is performed tonight is characterized by an extraordinary rhythmic forward propulsion, and employs the kind of dazzling harmonic invention which would be the envy of any composer, whether before or after Bach. With this fantastic musical ‘tour de force’ we reach the climax of this celebration in sound from across Europe of the work of Europa Nostra.

**Marshall Marcus**

**EUYO Executive & Artistic Director, 2025**