

MEDIA RELEASE

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment & Rachel Podger

Legendary orchestra on first full national tour

9-21 November 2017



Members of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (Image: OAE)



Rachel Podger, director and violin (Image: Theresa Pewal)

"The symphony becomes a glorious, fiery beast." - **Classical Source**

"There is probably no more inspirational musician working today than Podger." - **Gramophone**

From **9 to 21 November 2017**, **Musica Viva** is thrilled to present the world-renowned **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** on its first, widely anticipated full tour of Australia. The ground-breaking ensemble will be directed by leading baroque violinist **Rachel Podger** in a stunning program of **Haydn, JC Bach and Mozart** – a rare chance to hear this glorious music on original instruments played by the great masters of our time. Not all orchestras are the same – and this one is a must for all enlightened music fans.

As Andrew Mellow writes: *'Three decades ago, a group of London musicians took a good look at that curious institution we call the Orchestra, and decided to start again from scratch. They began by throwing out the rulebook. Put a single conductor in charge? No way. Specialise in repertoire of a particular era? Too restricting. Perfect a work and then move on? Too lazy. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment was born.*

Since then, the OAE has shocked, changed and mesmerised the music world. Residencies at the Southbank Centre and Glyndebourne haven't numbed its experimentalist bent. Record deals haven't ironed out its quirks. Period-specific instruments have become just one element of its quest for authenticity.

Today the OAE is cherished more than ever. It still pushes for change, and still stands for excellence, diversity and exploration. And thirty years on, there's still no orchestra in the world quite like it.'

Hailed **"the queen of the baroque violin"** in the Sunday Times, **Rachel Podger** is a perfect match for the OAE. A leading interpreter of baroque and classical music, she is a soloist and guest director with many of the world's top ensembles, runs her own group, Brecon Baroque, and was the first woman to be awarded the prestigious Royal Academy of Music/Kohn Foundation Bach Prize in October 2015. Recently her CD of the Biber Rosary Sonatas won a Gramophone Award, while her Vivaldi L'Estro Armonico scooped both a BBC Music Magazine Award and a Diapason d'Or.

Podger has worked frequently with the OAE over the past decade. "Individually they're fantastic musicians and they all have many strengths," she says, "but when you put them together there is a sense of adventure and openness which is lovely, and at the same time they have a unified sense of identity. It's rather special."

Their program matches the youthful Mozart's Violin Concertos nos 1 and 5 with Johann Christian Bach's Symphony in G minor op 6 no 6, and Haydn's Symphony no 26 in D minor. "The Mozart concertos are so incredibly well-crafted and there's so much wit and conversation going on that they almost play themselves," Podger enthuses.

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“And JC Bach was a real character! Known as ‘the London Bach’, he was probably more popular than his father in his day. Of course, his music was a bit of reaction against his father’s. It’s generally much more light-hearted. If you put them side by side, you’d think JC was a soufflé and JS a rich fruitcake!”

“There’s a great story about Mozart meeting JC Bach,” she continues. “When Mozart came to London at seven or eight years of age, he met JC, who was in his twenties, and they struck up a friendship. There’s a wonderful account of them both improvising – they have some kind of competition going on and Mozart wins, to the delight of everyone around.”

“Then the Haydn symphony is great because it gives different people different roles. Haydn is utterly underrated these days. It’s so entertaining with so many unexpected turns, such elegance and beauty – in a different way from Mozart.”

The challenges of travelling with early instruments and gut strings are extreme because of their sensitivity to climatic conditions. “You have to have plenty of strings and plenty of patience because things tend to get stuck,” Podger acknowledges. “It’s much more reliable to use metal strings. But then you don’t get the benefits of the beautiful mellow colours, or the brightness, or the variety of sound you can get from playing really into the string.”

Podger loves directing from the violin. “For me it’s really important to be part of the creation in terms of sound, not just in terms of instruction. That’s also the great thing about the OAE: the input is so lively and constructive from everyone. People just feel very involved and in a different way.”

The OAE & Rachel Podger will tour to Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane and Perth. For bookings and further details, please visit www.musicaviva.com.au/orchestra.

Rachel Podger will also mentor talented young students at a masterclass in Sydney on 13 November. Members of the public are welcome to attend. For details, please see <https://musicaviva.com.au/masterclass-rachel-podger/>.¹

ORCHESTRA OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

RACHEL PODGER director and violin

TOUR DATES²

Adelaide **09 Nov 2017 7:30 PM**
Sydney **11 Nov 2017 2:00 PM**
Sydney **13 Nov 2017 7:00 PM**
Melbourne **14 Nov 2017 7:00 PM**
Canberra **16 Nov 2017 7:00 PM**
Melbourne **18 Nov 2017 7:00 PM³**
Brisbane **19 Nov 2017 3:00 PM⁴**
Perth **21 Nov 2017 7:30 PM**

VENUES

Adelaide: **Adelaide Town Hall**
Brisbane: **Queensland Performing Arts Centre**
Canberra: **Llewellyn Hall**
Melbourne: **Melbourne Recital Centre**
Perth: **Perth Concert Hall**
Sydney: **City Recital Hall**

²Tour supported by the Musica Viva Amadeus Society.

³Melbourne Weekend Concert: Paul Morawetz Tribute Concert. ⁴Brisbane concert presented in association with Camerata.

PROGRAM

HAYDN Symphony no 26 in D minor
MOZART Violin Concerto no 1 in B-flat major, K207
JC BACH Symphony in G minor, op 6 no 6
MOZART Violin Concerto no 5 in A major, K219



Image: Keith Saunders

¹Musica Viva's Musica Viva's Masterclass program is supported by principal patrons Stephen Johns & Michele Bender, the Sydney Conservatorium Association (NSW), Lyn Hamill & Ian Dover (Queensland), Wesfarmers Arts (Western Australia), Anonymous Donor (South Australia), and Mary Turner OAM (Newcastle). Sydney masterclass presented with support from City of Sydney.

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FULL BIOGRAPHIES



ORCHESTRA OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT



Cecelia Bruggemeyer, Double Bass (Image: OAE)



Roger Montgomery, Horn (Image: OAE)

Three decades ago, a group of inquisitive London musicians took a long hard look at that curious institution we call the Orchestra, and decided to start again from scratch. They began by throwing out the rulebook. Put a single conductor in charge? No way. Specialise in repertoire of a particular era? Too restricting. Perfect a work and then move on? Too lazy. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment was born.

And as this distinctive ensemble playing on period-specific instruments began to get a foothold, it made a promise to itself. It vowed to keep questioning, adapting and inventing as long as it lived. Those original instruments became just one element of its quest for authenticity. Baroque and Classical music became just one strand of its repertoire. Every time the musical establishment thought it had a handle on what the OAE was all about, the ensemble pulled out another shocker: a *Symphonie Fantastique* here, some conductor-less Bach there. All the while, the Orchestra's players called the shots.

At first it felt like a minor miracle. Ideas and talent were plentiful; money wasn't. Somehow, the OAE survived to a year. Then to two. Then to five. It began to make benchmark recordings and attract the finest conductors. It became the toast of the European touring circuit. It bagged distinguished residencies at the Southbank Centre and Glyndebourne Festival Opera. It began, before long, to thrive.

And then came the real challenge. The ensemble's musicians were branded eccentric idealists. And that they were determined to remain. In the face of the music industry's big guns, the OAE kept its head. It got organised but remained experimentalist. It sustained its founding drive but welcomed new talent. It kept on exploring performance formats, rehearsal approaches and musical techniques. It searched for the right repertoire, instruments and approaches with even greater resolve. It kept true to its founding vow.

In some small way, the OAE changed the classical music world too. It challenged those distinguished partner organisations and brought the very best from them, too. Symphony and opera orchestras began to ask it for advice. Existing period instrument groups started to vary their conductors and repertoire. New ones popped up all over Europe and America.

And so the story continues, with ever more momentum and vision. The OAE's series of nocturnal Night Shift performance have redefined concert parameters. Its new home at London's Kings Place has fostered further diversity of planning and music-making. Great performances now become recordings on the Orchestra's in-house CD label. The ensemble has formed the bedrock for some of Glyndebourne's most ground-breaking recent productions. It travels as much abroad as to the UK regions: New York and Amsterdam court it, Birmingham and Bristol cherish it.

Remarkable people are behind it. Simon Rattle, the young conductor in whom the OAE placed so much of its initial trust, still cleaves to the ensemble. Iván Fischer, the visionary who punted some of his most individual musical ideas on the young orchestra, continues to challenge it. Mark Elder still mines for luminosity, shade and line. Vladimir Jurowski, the podium technician with an insatiable appetite for creative renewal, has drawn from it some of the most revelatory noises of recent years. And, most recently, it's been a laboratory for John Butt's most exciting Bach experiments. All five of them share the title Principal Artist.

Of the instrumentalists, many remain from those brave first days; many have come since. All seem as eager and hungry as ever. They're offered ever greater respect, but continue only to question themselves. Because still, they pride themselves on sitting ever so slightly outside the box. They wouldn't want it any other way. ©Andrew Mellor www.oae.co.uk

MEDIA RELEASE

RACHEL PODGER director and violin



Images: Keith Saunders

Rachel Podger, “*the queen of the baroque violin*” (Sunday Times), has established herself as a leading interpreter of the Baroque and Classical music periods. She was the first woman to be awarded the prestigious Royal Academy of Music/Kohn Foundation Bach Prize in October 2015. A creative programmer, she is the founder and Artistic Director of Brecon Baroque Festival and her ensemble Brecon Baroque, and was resident artist at Kings Place for their 2016 season *Baroque Unwrapped*. Rachel celebrates her 50th birthday in 2018 with a much-anticipated recording of Bach cello suites on violin, a recording of Vivaldi *Four Seasons*, and an exciting and innovative collaboration with world-renowned a cappella group VOCES8, ‘*Guardian Angel*’.

Recent engagements include a collaboration with Kristian Bezuidenhout with performances in Italy (Padova), Katowice (Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra), Antwerp (AMUZ), Amsterdam (Noorderkerkconcerten), Den Haag, Germany (Kiel), Spain (Seville), Music at Oxford, and Boston Early Music Festival (USA). This summer, Rachel led Brecon Baroque in their debut at the Edinburgh International Festival, and performed solo recitals and broadcasts for BBC Radio 3 throughout the UK and Europe with harpsichordist Marcin Swiatkiewicz, Rachel collaborated with acclaimed vocal group I Fagiolini to open the BBC Proms Chamber Music Series.

Rachel’s 17/18 concert calendar is triple crowned by an extensive tour to Australia (Musica Viva) & Europe with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment performing Mozart, a tour of Vivaldi *Four Seasons* with her own Brecon Baroque to celebrate the CD, and an exciting new collaboration, *Guardian Angel*, with star vocal ensemble VOCES8. Further treats include a tour with BBC National Orchestra of Wales, solo concerts and tours to Spain, Holland, Japan and the Canary Islands, and appearances at the Wigmore Hall and Lincoln Center.

As a director and soloist, Rachel has enjoyed countless collaborations with musicians all over the world. Highlights include Robert Levin, Jordi Savall, Masaaki Suzuki, European Union Baroque Orchestra, English Concert, The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, The Academy of Ancient Music, Holland Baroque Society, Tafelmusik (Toronto), and within the USA the Berwick Academy, the Handel and Haydn Society, Berkeley Early Music, Oregon Bach Festival, and Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra.

Rachel records exclusively for Channel Classics with over 25 discs including the complete Mozart Sonatas. Bach *Art of Fugue* with Brecon Baroque was released in September 2016 to rave reviews “*with playing of this sophistication, the restricted sound palette works wonderfully, supporting a calm, ruminative exploration of the many fugal devices*” (The Guardian). Her latest recording with Brecon Baroque, *Grandissima Gravita*, will be released in September 2017.

Rachel has won numerous awards including two Baroque Instrumental Gramophone Awards for *La Stravaganza* (2003) and *Biber Rosary Sonatas* (2016), the Diapason d’Or de l’année in the Baroque Ensemble category for *La Cetra* Vivaldi concertos (2012), a BBC Music Magazine Award in the instrumental category for *Guardian Angel* (2014), and multiple Diapasons d’Or. The complete Vivaldi *L’Estro Armonico* concertos (2015) with Brecon Baroque was Record of the Month for both BBC Music and Gramophone Magazines, won the concerto category of the 2016 BBC Music Magazine Award, was awarded a Diapason d’Or and was shortlisted for a Gramophone Award (2015).

She is a dedicated educator and holds an honorary position at both the Royal Academy of Music, where she holds the Micaela Comberti Chair for Baroque Violin (founded in 2008), and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama where she holds the Jane Hodge Foundation International Chair in Baroque Violin. She also has a developing relationship with The Juilliard School in New York. www.rachelpodger.com

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