

## **Sounds New Contemporary Music Festival - Canterbury**

**Sounds New** is now firmly established as a central part of the UK's contemporary music calendar. It all began in 1997, when a group of Kentish friends met and decided it was time to seriously promote the music of our own time in a place where cultural heritage was key to its very being. Twelve years on, **Sounds New 2009** celebrates the music of Poland and adopts the theme **Polish Connections**. This is the first major celebration of Polish contemporary music to have taken place in the UK in recent years. With significant financial support from the Adam Mickiewicz Institute and the Polish Cultural Institute, it has been possible to create a programme that celebrates the extraordinary impact that Polish music of the last forty or so years has made on contemporary music in general.

The world-renowned composer **Krzysztof Penderecki** is the featured composer, and he comes to Canterbury to hear the UK premieres of his recent *Sextet* and brand new *String Quartet no. 3*. To add to the special nature of the event, the great composer conducts a team of star soloists, the Warsaw Boys Choir, Camerata Silesia, Polish Radio Choir Katowice and the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra in his great **St. Luke Passion**. This is the first time this monumental work has been performed in the UK in nearly thirty years. The *St. Luke Passion* occupies a unique place in the music of the Twentieth Century. It was written to commemorate the seven hundredth anniversary of Munster Cathedral and its premiere in 1966 coincided with the thousandth anniversary of Christianity's introduction into Poland. Few people could have predicted the immense impact the work had on its audience, the extraordinary critical acclaim it received and the palpable influence it has continued to have on subsequent composers all over the world. The model was Bach's Passions, and Penderecki also used psalms and hymns to further increase the spiritual and emotive depth. However, unlike Bach, Penderecki employed vast forces, creating a sound world of immeasurable emotive power. The fact that this great work will be performed in Canterbury Cathedral means a huge amount to the Sounds New team, all of whom have longed to see this dream become a reality.

The great cathedral in Canterbury is central to Sounds New's mission. Sounds New aims to raise the appreciation as well as the significance of contemporary music to a wider audience, and it aims to demonstrate its profundity. The performance of contemporary music is far too often assigned to quiet and small spaces. Great cathedrals are often seen as the domain of the music of yesteryear. But this is far from the case in Canterbury. Music is, after all, an experience that touches and emboldens the soul, and it is the music of our time that speaks about the 'here and now'. It is also the music that young people can relate to most easily.

Sounds New's education and outreach work is central to its existence. The festival finds practical ways to facilitate learning and to share good ideas, making sure that composers, performers and artists impact on the community to everyone's advantage. Sounds New creates performing groups and new compositions by professionals, amateurs and students alike, and it offers opportunities for the creation of new music from different genres such as electronic, new media, improvised music and chamber and orchestral music.

Arts Council England have also realised the impact Sounds New makes on the national music scene, and its 2009 grant is the largest ever awarded to the organisation. This helps ensure the highest possible standards of music making come to Canterbury. This year, performers include the great virtuoso trumpeter and Principal of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama John Wallace who directs his finest students together with leading players from The Philharmonia Orchestra in a programme of celebratory music that opens the festival and culminates in a performance of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* in the Quire of Canterbury Cathedral. Other performers include Motion Trio, London Sinfonietta, Rolf Hind, Teresa Malik - the Grand Prix winner of the 2008 International Contemporary Chamber Music Competition, Olga Pasiiecznik and the Silesian String Quartet and the Aurora Orchestra.

The festival has developed strong links with fellow organisations. Orange Street Music Club presents artists such as Oren Marshall, who plays his multi-tuba via his entire electronic armoury, together with local bands such as Stilton, Syd Arthur and The Quartet. From New York comes Thomas Truax, who brings with him an array of self made instruments. From Brazil comes the sensational chanteuse Cibelle, and from Poland comes the Max Klezmer Band, the best band of its kind in Europe. To confirm the significant relationship with the community and our great cathedral, the Choir of Canterbury Cathedral give a festival evensong in which they perform the music of Penderecki. Interestingly, it was the Choir of Canterbury Cathedral directed by Dr David Flood that gave the very first Sounds New concert back in 1997.

*Polish Connections* marks the start of the ***Polska Year!*** – the Polish Cultural Season in the UK. In its ten days, Sounds New 2009 embraces well over forty events. It sees over twenty UK premieres including works by Penderecki, Gorecki, Kulenty and a host of influential Polish composers. It has also commissioned a series of new works, many by composers who have either been profoundly influenced by the music of Poland or who have strong associations with Canterbury. Gabriel Jackson was an ex-cathedral chorister, Richard Peat was a student at The Kings School, Hugo Ribeiro is a PhD student in Canterbury. The list goes on. In the ten days, there are some twenty world premieres. And music is not where Sounds New stops... there are opportunities to see films and documentaries that have not been screened for far too long, there are practical workshops, there are exhibitions, and there are installations.

But what of Sounds New's future, and what of its aspirations? Plans are already afoot for 2010 and 2011. America is key to 2010 and Scandinavia is central to 2011. Sounds New aims to bring the very best music of our time to a place of real and profound cultural significance, and it aims to let people delve deeper into the riches and excitement that makes our time one of the most musically dynamic.

For further information about the Sounds New 2009 programme, please visit [www.soundsnew.org.uk](http://www.soundsnew.org.uk) or phone 01227 780800.