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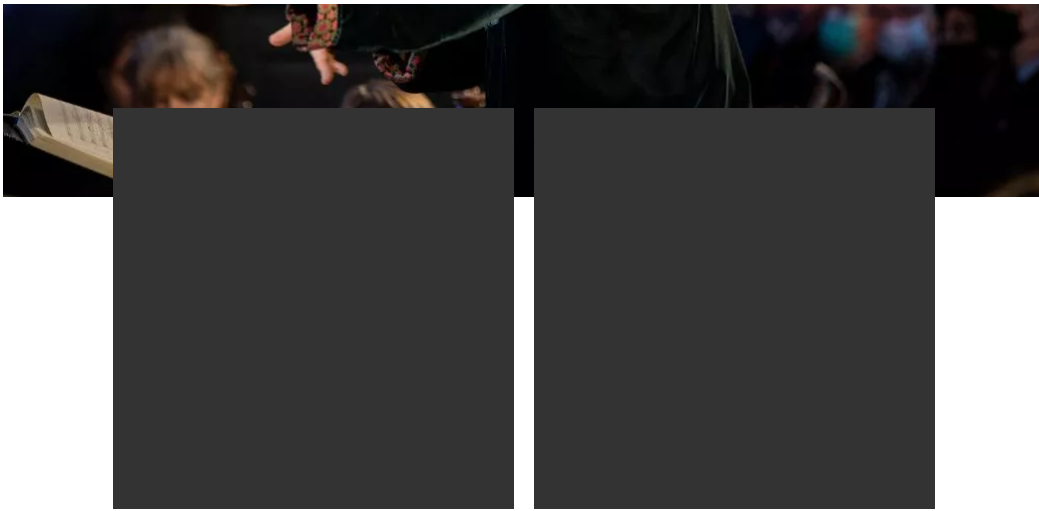
## Gardiner and the English Baroque Soloists roll back the centuries at St Martin-in-the-Fields



By [Roy Westbrook](#), 14 January 2023

A concert of “Classical music” very narrowly defined, before those Proto-Romantics Beethoven and Schubert added extra drama and pathos, and the era’s classical purity and balance prevailed no more. Music’s development brings losses as well as gains of course, but who better to help us regain our 18th-century ears than the [English Baroque Soloists](#) under their founder and Artistic Director [Sir John Eliot Gardiner](#), and what better location than a classical building like London’s [St Martin-in-the-Fields](#)?





Haydn's *Symphony no. 84 in E flat major* is one of the more neglected of his six Paris symphonies, related it was said, whether as cause or effect, to its lack of a nickname, though the sobriquet "In nomine Domini" is sometimes seen. Not that the work is religious, but full of secular, even rustic, pleasures. Thus the Minuet has more of the heavy stamp of the tavern than the light tripping of the court, relished here by the EBS players. The wind cadenza of the *Andante* was a pungent delight with these period instruments, and the *Vivace* finale was spirited indeed. Sometimes the swift tempi Gardiner set, and his fondness for a sharp attack, while exhilarating in themselves, obscured the detail in the teeming invention of the monothematic outer movements from this most cerebral of the great symphonists.

But was it the tempi? St Martin-in-the-Fields is a very high but not very long space. The EBS toured this programme from the start of this week to Cologne, Wolfsburg and Vienna, so their last venue was the Musikverein, whose gilded hall is very different from St Martin's. Here we had a big band, as befits music for the Paris of its day, with 30 string players named in the booklet (no. 84 adds a flute and pairs of oboes, horns and bassoons). From Row F of the stalls the Haydn tutti could sound almost raucous, so one feared the next *sforzando*, even with no trumpets and drums. So for the sole work in the second half, Mozart's *Symphony no. 36 in C major*, the "Linz", which does use trumpets and drums and gives them plenty to do, I sought a seat at the top, next to the organ, as far from the band as the venue offers. All was transformed, in a stirring performance with inner lines now revealed, yet still lively resonance and impact. The wise men and women who booked early and paid top price to sit so far from the action, were acoustically shrewd.



Between the symphonies was the greatest delight of the concert, because the most rare, Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola in E flat major*, with [Isabelle Faust](#) and [Antoine Tamestit](#),

no less. Not that the work is neglected, but these artists have plenty of solo work coming their way and we were grateful they made time to share a platform, and share the bewitching give-and-take of their music. When playing quartets, Mozart preferred the viola, so it is no second fiddle here, not least thanks to its retuning the composer requires. Tamestit's warm and woody tone contrasted ideally with Faust's brightness, both artists duetting hand in glove, even in the swift passages needing alert articulation. They were rewarded with big cheers and hugs from the conductor. The concert now moves to Budapest and Munich, and was recorded here for a later showing on "Stage +", Deutsche Grammophon's new streaming service.

★★★★★ ?

"Tamestit's warm and woody tone contrasted ideally with Faust's brightness... duetting hand in glove"



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Reviewed at St Martin-in-the-Fields, London on 13 January 2023

## PROGRAMME

**Haydn**, Symphony no. 84 in E flat Major "In nomine Domini"

**Mozart**, Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola in E flat major, K364 (K320d)

**Mozart**, Symphony no. 36 in C major, K425 "Linz"


## PERFORMERS

English Baroque Soloists

Isabelle Faust, *Violin*

Antoine Tamestit, *Viola*

Sir John Eliot Gardiner, *Conductor*



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Gardiner steps into his Ring of Cantatas in Leipzig

*Stephen Pritchard, 13th June*

A taste of the opening weekend in Leipzig's marathon Bach Festival.

★★★★☆

### A religious experience at Prague Spring

*Frank Kuznik, 18th May*

Sir John Eliot Gardiner and his Baroque specialists continue their crusade to bring Bach's church cantatas to the modern world.

★★★★☆

### Evil triumphs beautifully in Monteverdi 450 *Poppea*

*Ilana Walder-Biesanz, 30th July*

The final opera in Sir John Eliot Gardiner's Monteverdi 450 trilogy features an excellent cast and inspires deep emotion.

★★★★☆

### An emotional *L'Orfeo* for Monteverdi 450

*Ilana Walder-Biesanz, 27th July*

Sir John Eliot Gardiner's Monteverdi 450 trilogy began its Salzburg run with a tear-jerking concert performance of *L'Orfeo*.

★★★★★

### A perfect Easter recipe at the Barbican

*Dominic Lowe, 27th March*

John Eliot Gardiner assembled the Monteverdi Choir and the English Baroque Soloists for a moving performance of JS Bach's great oratorio.

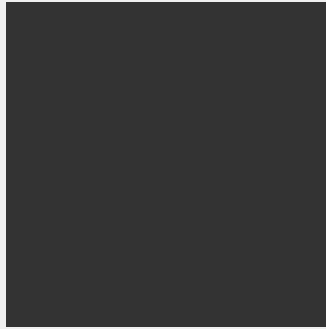
★★★★☆

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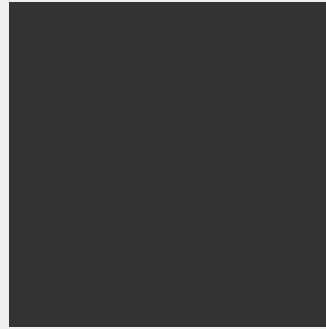
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### Roy Westbrook

Roy Westbrook gained a diploma in music history at London University (Morley College) and was for some years the head of music day schools at Oxford University, where he also led music summer schools. After some years leading the University's business school he has returned to music teaching and writing, and recently took part in the Arts in Residence courses on Bruckner, Mahler and Bach. He is co-author (with Terry Barfoot) of a history of opera, and has taught day schools on Sibelius in Oxford and elsewhere.

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