

David Owen Norris – Best of British, part two

Saturday May 25th

10.30am – 11.30am

Ludlow Assembly Rooms

Bax	<i>Second Sonata</i>
Elgar	<i>Improvisations towards a Piano Concerto</i>
James MacMillan Michael Berkeley William Mathias	<i>Variations on a theme of Henry Purcell</i>
Madeleine Dring	<i>Fantasy-Sonata</i> <i>Waltz Finale</i>

Programme shown may be changed without notice



David Owen Norris is a pianist, composer and broadcaster who has performed all across the world, with many appearances in the BBC Proms, and concert tours of Europe, Australia and North America. He has a discography of 60 CDs including his own Piano Concerto with the BBC Concert Orchestra, and his oratorio *Prayerbook*. His other compositions include a Symphony, the oratorio *Turning Points*, and the multi-media tribute to the passing seasons, *HengeMusic*.

His *Perfect Pianists* is often repeated on BBC4. He has contributed to programmes on Parry, Vaughan Williams, Mendelssohn & Elgar. The Beethoven 9 app for which he wrote the book and the analyses won the Best Music App Award.

His many radio presentations include: *Playlist* on Radio 4, and *In Tune* and *The Works* on Radio 3. He makes his 33rd appearance on *Building a Library* in March comparing recordings of Walton's Viola Concerto.

The Wellspring (Seren Books), conversations with his son, the novelist and playwright Barney Norris, deals with cultural inheritance and the question of Englishness across different arts. Developed as a stage show, it toured widely in 2022 to critical acclaim.

David is Professor of Musical Performance at the University of Southampton, Visiting Professor at the Royal Northern College of Music, and an Honorary Fellow of Keble College,

Programme notes

Great composers in Britain have not made the piano their own in the way of a Chopin, a Schumann, or a Messiaen. But they have often used the instrument as a light to shine into the private depths of their minds, and with a few clues thrown in from a lifetime's experience, you can share some of their profoundest thoughts.

Sir Arnold Bax (1883-1953) - *Second Sonata*

Bax was Master of the King's Music, both English millionaire and penniless revolutionary Irish poet, composer of *Tintagel* and of seven symphonies. His dark *Second Sonata* reflects on the Easter Rising of 1916, in which he lost many Irish friends, and which swept away his schizophrenic dual identity: one and the same man was banned by the censor during World War One (O'Byrne's poetry was openly republican) and appointed Master of the King's Music during World War Two.

This Sonata is variously described as 'the best single-movement sonata since Liszt' (Rachmaninoff/Schnabel) and a 'struggle between good & evil' (Harriet Cohen and many others).

Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934) - *Improvisations towards a Piano Concerto*

David Owen Norris traces how Elgar's piano improvisations, recorded in 1929, could lead on to the great Piano Concerto that was in his mind.

James MacMillan, Michael Berkeley, William Mathias - *Variations on a theme of Henry Purcell*

The *Purcell Variations* were composed for the Kennedy Center (in 1991) as a contribution from the British Isles to a Gala Recital on the anniversary of the assassination of JFK. They were played by David Owen Norris.

Madeleine Dring (1923-1977) – *Fantasy Sonata, Waltz Finale*

A singer, actress, pupil of Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells, and composer of the evergreen *Five Betjeman Songs*, Madeleine Dring's ebullient *Fantasy-Sonata* is somewhat in the mode of Richard Addinsell's *Warsaw Concerto*.

The *Waltz Finale* is the fourth movement of her *Dance Suite* for piano.

