

Media Information
May 22, 2017

BMW LSO Open Air Classics 2017 attracts thousands to Trafalgar Square

Free open air concert with rising star of the piano Behzod Abduraimov

London. The London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) gave a free, open-air concert to a crowd of thousands in London's Trafalgar Square yesterday, in an annual concert series presented in partnership with BMW. The LSO, with piano soloist Behzod Abduraimov, performed music by the Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninov and showcased its work with young musicians from East London, who performed on stage as part of the Orchestra. The audience was guided through the performance by presenter Lucy Griffiths with the assistance of films specially created by the LSO. For the past six years, BMW LSO Open Air Classics has provided the opportunity for the LSO's musicians to get outside and into the heart of the city to perform for an audience who are mostly experiencing the LSO live in concert for the first time.

Dr Ian Robertson, Member of the Board of Management of BMW AG, addressing the audience from the stage said: "Thousands of visitors are here today, not only from London itself, but from all over the world. We are delighted to make this possible together with our long-term partner, the London Symphony Orchestra. It is a very important element of our cultural engagement to encourage broader understanding and appreciation of the arts – and also support newcomers. This event today is a great example of that."

Kathryn McDowell, LSO Managing Director, said: "For a sixth year, the LSO's concert in Trafalgar Square has been a wonderful opportunity for our musicians to get out of the concert hall, and perform in the London sunshine. It remains completely free of charge and open to every Londoner or visitor to the city, and it was those two principles, which increase access to great music, that brought the LSO and BMW together in 2012. It is their continued support as our Principal Partner that enables us to present such a top-tier show in Trafalgar Square and I would like to offer sincere thanks to BMW, as well as the Mayor of London, for their continued commitment to the event. Our players love getting out onto the Trafalgar Square stage every year and the thrilling experience for the young people performing with the LSO is truly special."

Behzod Abduraimov opened the concert with a performance of Rachmaninov's "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini", with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev. This virtuosic work, known to many from its use in films such as "Singapore Sling" and "Groundhog Day", was given a dazzling performance by Abduraimov before the stage was set for 40 young musicians from schools in east London to join the LSO for a special performance of Rachmaninov's "Symphonic Dances" (first movement, "Non Allegro"). Aged between 11 and 18 years they sat amongst the members of the LSO and musicians from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, all performing together from a specially-commissioned arrangement of the music allowing players of mixed ability to perform together. The young people take part in the LSO On Track programme, a pioneering collaboration between the LSO and the East London boroughs which, in partnership with local Music Education Hubs, builds on existing musical provision in schools. By giving students and teaching staff special access to LSO musicians in schools, LSO On Track vastly enriches music learning in the East London boroughs and offers thrilling opportunities such as this one for young people to perform with the LSO.

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Valery Gergiev then conducted the London Symphony Orchestra in a performance of three movements from Rachmaninov's vast "Symphony No 2" which brought this year's BMW LSO Open Air Classics to an electrifying close.

The concert was projected live onto large screens at the sides of the stage, and elsewhere in the Square, allowing everyone to see the Orchestra up close and a state-of-the-art sound system ensured the very best quality of sound, making the experience equally special at the back of the square as at the front.

BMW's open-air series will continue in Munich on June 24 with an outdoor concert as the kick-off to the Munich Opera Festival and on July 9 with an outdoor screening of Richard Wagner's opera "Tannhäuser", all in partnership with the Bavarian State Opera.

About BMW Group's Cultural Commitment

For almost 50 years now, the BMW Group has initiated and engaged in over 100 cultural cooperations worldwide. The company places the main focus of its long-term commitment on contemporary and modern art, classical music and jazz as well as architecture and design. In 1972, three large-scale paintings were created by the artist Gerhard Richter specifically for the foyer of the BMW Group's Munich headquarters. Since then, artists such as Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons, Daniel Barenboim, Jonas Kaufmann and architect Zaha Hadid have co-operated with BMW. Currently, female artist Cao Fei from China and American John Baldessari are creating the next two vehicles for the BMW Art Car Collection. Besides co-initiatives, such as BMW Tate Live, the BMW Art Journey and the "Opera for All" concerts in Berlin, Munich and London, the company also partners with leading museums and art fairs as well as orchestras and opera houses around the world. The BMW Group takes absolute creative freedom in all its cultural activities – as this initiative is as essential for producing groundbreaking artistic work as it is for major innovations in a successful business. Further information: www.bmwgroup.com/culture and www.bmwgroup.com/culture/overview

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In 2016, the BMW Group sold approximately 2.367 million cars and 145,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax was approximately € 9.67 billion on revenues amounting to € 94.16 billion. As of 31 December 2016, the BMW Group had a workforce of 124,729 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

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