

The Great Mosaic - Celebrating Europe's Musical Heritage in 2018

For anyone who has not noticed, 2018 has been declared by the EU as [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#). For many the first question might be, 'yes, but what does that mean?' Well for the EUYO that has translated into our busiest year for as long as we can remember. And a theme for the year called the *Great Mosaic*.

June 2018

One reason for this theme is that in recent decades, as Europe's challenges have seemed to pile increasingly one on top of another, one field of European activity has continuously flourished: its *music*. Building on traditions of immense variety stretching back many hundreds of years in dozens of countries, new generations of Europeans are busy creating all manner of ground-breaking compositions, and that seemingly old fashioned European construct the '*orchestra*' is now flamboyantly spreading and expanding around the globe in places as previously unlikely as China, East Africa, South America and the Arabian Gulf; places where one might not have imagined - let us be honest - that a European invention would be such a welcome addition.

Yet expand it has. And if its tradition is great, then so, happily, is its innovation.

At the EUYO we see *variety* as the key to celebrating this cultural success. Thus throughout 2018 we are performing more than ninety compositions from all corners of Europe in live concerts in more than a dozen countries that will be broadcast around the globe. And these are compositions that date from ancient times (to include the folk music) to tomorrow, with a world premiere for performance in August.

That premiere takes place on 13 August 2018 when the audience in Poland's handsome Warsaw Philharmonic Hall will hear Agata Zubel's *Fireworks* as the opening piece of that evening's EUYO concert. As the composition rings out into the generous acoustic of Poland's most venerable concert hall as part of the *Chopin and His Europe* Festival, listeners will be hearing its sounds in public performance for the first time ever. Another piece of art to add to the prolific mosaic of Europe's cultural heritage? Well yes, but commissions take precious time, resource and money, and so we have a right to ask exactly how such works provide benefit in today's Europe of finite resource.



On the one hand the justification has surely to be intrinsic: as a society we develop, we grow, we are *amplified* by the addition of music that both comes from a tradition, yet also breaks new ground. *Fireworks* will surely be no exception in this regard. But there is more. *Fireworks* is a double commission by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute as part of the international cultural programme POLSKA 100 that is celebrating the 100th anniversary of Poland's independence, and by the European Union Youth Orchestra as part of 2018 *European Year of Cultural Heritage*.

What such allusions both mean and do not mean is well summed up by the composer's own programme note: "History sometimes presents itself as a perfidious cobweb of events made up of evolving sequences of causes and results, which lose track of their own logic in the naïve hope that the imperfect human memory will fail to notice the inconsistencies" she says. "A look back at a hundred years of the nation's traditions, successes and challenges, of culture, its contexts and thoughts, and eventually – of music itself (!) – could well result in an endless gallery of observations and associations. It can also produce, however, a vision of our here-and-now, of the present seen as the fruit of everything that happened before. I do not usurp the right to sum up the past or to warn people with my music. All I want to do is exclaim, *'I am happy to be alive and free, here and now!'*"

So the music is justification in itself, as well as a platform for other themes that range from narrative to national identity. The day after the Warsaw premiere that platform moves to Berlin and the *Young Euro Classic* festival that celebrates Europe and young musicians. Then it travels to the BBC Proms, where in London's Royal Albert Hall the piece will be performed in a city more used to Handel's world famous 1749 work of the same name (a fact that is surely not accidental, but yet another historical allusion).



At this point the piece's first run of performances will be complete. Many thousands will have listened to it in concerts and radio broadcasts and recordings, or watched it on the BBC iPlayer.

But for the EUYO, as cultural ambassador for the EU, that is just one project amongst many this year, with a variety that is dense to the point of being jam-packed. In the second half of 2018 it includes a new Chamber Academy in Ferrara with outreach work with young Italian musicians, several concerts to celebrate Austria's EU presidency, a concert for peace to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the first world war, the continuation of a project to develop understanding between China and the EU through a side-by-side partnership with the Shanghai Orchestra Academy, and an alumni project

with our partner Grafenegg that charts the last hundred years of music in Europe and its diaspora well beyond this continent.

With performances in Europe, the Middle East, South America and Asia this year, this adds up to a formidable array of work exploring Europe's musical heritage. In the midst of this activity I am constantly struck by the liveliness and engaging quality it possesses: time and time again I witness audience members who declare that these performances make the idea of Europe *tangible*, quite apart from any musical enjoyment. *Fireworks* then, may turn out to be the signature not just for a new piece of music, but perhaps for an entire year of activity.

In an unquestionably difficult time for Europe such an array also surely goes to disprove rather than support the diplomat who infamously summed up what Europe had to offer the modern world as merely 'museums and education'. Rather it calls to mind the words of Jean Monnet, reflecting on the beginnings and subsequent history of the EU: "If I had to do it again" he declared, "I would begin with culture". Quite right too.

Such a Europe - an open culture marrying creativity and diversity in equal, brilliant and abundant measure - is surely the best definition of our continent at its best. Others have already imagined such a state: consider the words of the Scottish journalist and writer Neil Ascherson, "*My sense of Europe ... is that it is like a sponge ... a rich and beautiful collective creature into whose open pores countless visiting organisms swim or stay to breed*". Yes, in Europe we have our problems, our challenges and our contradictions, but we also have this astounding legacy of cultural creation. So join us in 2018 as we continue celebrate the *Great Mosaic, Europe's Musical Heritage*.

Want to read more?

Part one of our 2018 Year Book: [The Great Mosaic, Celebrating Europe's Musical Heritage](#)



For details of the EUYO's upcoming performances this year as part of *The Great Mosaic*, click [here](#)

More from our #EUYONewsletter:

[Players & Alumni: Meetup](#)

[Exclusive interview with EUYO alumnus and past Principal First Violin of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Sarah Sew](#)



Honorary President **Antonio Tajani** - President of the European Parliament Co-Founder & President **Joy Bryer OBE** Founding Music Director **Claudio Abbado** Chief Conductor **Vasily Petrenko** Conductor Laureate **Bernard Haitink** Co-Chairman **Ian Stoutzker, CBE** Co-Chairman **Sir John Tusa** Chief Executive **Marshall Marcus**

Honorary Patrons & Committee

Head of the Honorary Patrons **Jean-Claude Juncker** - President of the European Commission
Honorary Patron **Federica Mogherini** - High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission The heads of state and government of the 28 EU member states, President of the European Committee of the Regions

The EUYO is funded with support from the European Union's Creative Europe programme and from the 28 member governments of the European Union, under the auspices of the International Youth Foundation recognised in the United Kingdom as a charity, Reg No 281420. VAT No GB 240 4275 91