

OAE Biographies valid for use in the 2018–2019 season. Proofs should be approved by Anna Bennett (anna.bennett@oae.co.uk / 020 7239 9374)

Also, where possible, please include:

WEBSITE oae.co.uk
TWITTER theoae
FACEBOOK orchestraoftheageofenlightenment

**Six Chapters of Enlightenment**

**Bach, the Universe and Everything**

**Sir Andras Schiff**

**BIOGRAPHY LONG –//600**

In 1986, a group of inquisitive London musicians took a long hard look at that curious institution we call the Orchestra, and decided to start again from scratch. They began by throwing out the rulebook. Put a single conductor in charge? No way. Specialise in repertoire of a particular era? Too restricting. Perfect a work and then move on? Too lazy. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment was born.

And as this distinctive ensemble playing on period-specific instruments began to get a foothold, it made a promise to itself. It vowed to keep questioning, adapting and inventing as long as it lived. Those original instruments became just one element of its quest for authenticity. Baroque and Classical music became just one strand of its repertoire. Every time the musical establishment thought it had a handle on what the OAE was all about, the ensemble pulled out another shocker: a Symphonie Fantastique here, some conductor-less Bach there. All the while, the Orchestra’s players called the shots.

At first it felt like a minor miracle. Ideas and talent were plentiful; money wasn’t. Somehow, the OAE survived to a year. Then to two. Then to five. It began to make benchmark recordings and attract the finest conductors. It became the toast of the European touring circuit. It bagged distinguished residencies at the Southbank Centre and Glyndebourne Festival Opera. It began, before long, to thrive.

And then came the real challenge. The ensemble’s musicians were branded eccentric idealists, and that they were determined to remain. In the face of the music industry’s big guns, the OAE kept its head. It got organised but remained experimentalist. It sustained its founding drive but welcomed new talent. It kept on exploring performance formats, rehearsal approaches and musical techniques. It searched for the right repertoire, instruments and approaches with even greater resolve. It kept true to its founding vow.

In some small way, the OAE changed the classical music world too. It challenged those distinguished partner organisations and brought the very best from them, too. Symphony and opera orchestras began to ask it for advice. Existing period instrument groups started to vary their conductors and repertoire. New ones popped up all over Europe and America.

And so the story continues, with ever more momentum and vision. The Night Shift series of informal performances have redefined concert parameters. Its base at London’s Kings Place has fostered further creativity, such as Bach, the Universe and Everything, a trailblazing Sunday morning series with contributions from esteemed scientists. And from 2017, it started Six Chapters of Enlightenment, six extraordinary seasons exploring the music, science and philosophy of the golden age from which the Orchestra takes its name.

Remarkable people are behind it. Simon Rattle, the young conductor in whom the OAE placed so much of its initial trust, still cleaves to the ensemble. Iván Fischer, the visionary who punted some of his most individual musical ideas on the young orchestra, continues to challenge it. Mark Elder still mines for luminosity, shade and line. Vladimir Jurowski, the podium technician with an insatiable appetite for creative renewal, has drawn from it some of the most revelatory noises of recent years. And, most recently, it’s been a laboratory for John Butt’s most exciting Bach experiments, and Sir András Schiff’s masterful piano sounds. All six of them share the title Principal Artist.

Of the instrumentalists, many remain from those brave first days; many have come since. All seem as eager and hungry as ever. They’re offered ever greater respect, but continue only to question themselves. Because still, they pride themselves on sitting ever so slightly outside the box. They wouldn’t want it any other way.

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**BIOGRAPHY MEDIUM –//250**

In 1986, a group of inquisitive London musicians took a long hard look at that curious institution we call the Orchestra, and decided to start again from scratch. They began by throwing out the rulebook. Put a single conductor in charge? No way. Specialise in repertoire of a particular era? Too restricting. Perfect a work and then move on? Too lazy. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment was born.

And as this distinctive ensemble playing on period-specific instruments began to get a foothold, it made a promise to itself. It vowed to keep questioning and inventing as long as it lived. Residencies at the Southbank Centre and the Glyndebourne Festival didn’t numb its experimentalist bent. A major record deal didn’t iron out its quirks. Instead, the OAE examined musical notes with ever more freedom and resolve.

That creative thirst remains unquenched. The Night Shift series of informal performances are redefining concert formats. Its base at London’s Kings Place has fostered further creativity, such as Bach, the Universe and Everything, a trailblazing Sunday morning series with contributions from esteemed scientists. And from 2017, it started Six Chapters of Enlightenment, six extraordinary seasons exploring the music, science and philosophy of the golden age from which the Orchestra takes its name.

Now more than thirty years old, the OAE is part of our musical furniture. It has even graced the outstanding conducting talents of Elder, Rattle, Jurowski, Iván Fischer, John Butt and Sir András Schiff’s with a joint title of Principal Artist. But don’t ever think the ensemble has lost sight of its founding vow. Not all orchestras are the same. And there’s nothing quite like this one.

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**BIOGRAPHY SHORT –//150**

More than three decades ago, a group of London musicians took a good look at that curious institution we call the Orchestra, and decided to start again from scratch. They began by throwing out the rulebook. Put a single conductor in charge? No way. Specialise in repertoire of a particular era? Too restricting. Perfect a work and then move on? Too lazy. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment was born.

Since then, the OAE has shocked, changed and mesmerised the music world. Residencies at the Southbank Centre and Glyndebourne haven’t numbed its experimentalist bent. Record deals haven’t ironed out its quirks. Period-specific instruments have become just one element of its quest for authenticity.

Today the OAE is cherished more than ever. It still pushes for change, and still stands for excellence, diversity and exploration. More than thirty years on, there’s still no orchestra in the world quite like it.

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