

## Biography:

### **Alessio Bax (Artistic Director)**

***"Alessio Bax is clearly among the most remarkable young pianists now before the public."*** – Gramophone

Alessio Bax, a pianist of authority, elegance and intensity (as described respectively by the *Daily Telegraph*, the *New Yorker* and *Gramophone*), is praised for his lyrical performances and compelling, insightful interpretations. As First Prize winner at the Leeds International Piano Competition, and the recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award, he has appeared as soloist with more than 100 orchestras, including the London and Royal Philharmonic orchestras, Houston and Cincinnati Symphonies, Japan's NHK Symphony, Dallas Symphony with Jaap van Zweden, St. Petersburg Philharmonic with Yuri Temirkanov, and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra with Sir Simon Rattle. In 2017 Bax was appointed Artistic Director of Italy's Incontri in Terra di Siena Festival for a three-year term. He has a burgeoning discography that includes works by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Rachmaninov and Stravinsky as well as a Russian album and a lullaby collection (*Lullabies For Mila* is dedicated to his daughter, Mila) – all of which have been singled out for distinction by the most discerning critics. His recording of a Bach cantata excerpt was recently included on the soundtrack of Luca Guadagnino's hit movie *Call Me By Your Name*.

### **Antonio Lysy (Co-Founder)**

Antonio Lysy is an internationally renowned cellist, appearing as a soloist in major concert halls around the world. He has performed with orchestras including the Philharmonia, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Camerata Salzburg, the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, the Orchestra di Padova e il Veneto, the Israel Sinfonietta, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Lysy has also performed under the baton of such distinguished conductors such as Yehudi Menuhin, Charles Dutoit, Yuri Temirkanov and Sandor Vegh. In 2010, Lysy released an album dedicated to cello works from Argentina, called *Antonio Lysy at The Broad: Music from Argentina* (released on the Yarlung Records label). He earned a Latin Grammy Award for the track *Pampas*, written for him by Lalo Schifrin.

In addition to his solo career, Lysy is also an experienced pedagogue. He spent a number of years as a professor at McGill University in Montreal. Lysy now holds the post of Professor of Cello and Head of Strings at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) where he now resides.

## **History of La Foce**

**Antonio Origo** (an Italian nobleman from Florence) and **Iris**, his young wife, bought La Foce in 1924 and dedicated their lives to bringing progress and social change to the poverty-ridden valley. During the Second World War and in its aftermath, the Origos remained at La Foce and sheltered evacuated children and escaped prisoners of war. Iris gives a vivid description of the events that engulfed La Foce during these tough years in her book *War in Val d'Orcia*.

The gardens of La Foce are cherished in Italy and abroad and have been featured in the BBC 2 programme **Monty Don's Italian Gardens**. Designed by the English architect **Cecil Pinsent**, who also created Bernard Berenson's garden at Villa I Tatti, they were gradually built from 1924 to 1939. The gardens were conceived to enhance the Villa and expand the spectacular view over the valley of the Orcia river to Monte Amiata beyond. The terraces gently blend with the

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landscape, following the humanistic Renaissance ideal of geometrical order close to the house, gradually becoming wilder as they approach the woods. Lemon pots, roses, Mediterranean plants, wisteria, box parterres, laurel and cypress hedges, and paths and benches of travertine punctuate the natural curves of the hills.

Antonio and Iris Origo's daughter Benedetta and grandson Antonio Lysy established the music festival in their memory in 1989. Lysy, a Los Angeles-based cellist, is the Artistic Director of the festival, which enjoys patronage from honorary board members including **Charles Dutoit, Maxim Vengerov, Maurizio Pollini, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Colin Firth.**

## **Iris Origo**

Iris Origo vividly describes the wonderful though sometimes difficult years at La Foce in her two autobiographical books, *Images and Shadows* and *War in Val d'Orcia*. Pushkin Press has now reissued both books. Iris (1902-1988) was brought up between Florence, Ireland and America, until she married Antonio Origo and settled at La Foce.

### **A Chill in the Air: An Italian War Diary 1939-1940**

(London: 2017 by Pushkin Press)

A hitherto unpublished diary, Iris Origo documents the grim absurdities that her adopted Italy underwent as war became more and more unavoidable. Connected to everyone, from the peasants on her estate to the US ambassador, she writes of the turmoil, the danger, and the dreadful bleakness of Italy in 1939-1940. Published posthumously with an introduction by Lucy Hughes-Hallett, and an afterword by Katia Lysy, granddaughter of Iris Origo, this is the precursor to Origo's bestselling classic diary *War in Val d'Orcia*.

### **Images and Shadows**

(London 1970; reissued by John Murray, London 1998 and David Godine, Boston 1999 and by Pushkin Press, 2017)

An autobiography, in which Iris Origo describes her childhood spent between Europe and America, and her subsequent move to La Foce, a large farm in Tuscany. There she shared with her husband Antonio the responsibility of bringing back prosperity to the barren land and impoverished people.

### **War in Val d'Orcia, An Italian War Diary 1943-1944**

(London 1947; reissued by David Godine, 1984 and by Pushkin Press, 2017)

A classic of the Second World War, this diary is an elegantly simple chronicle of daily life at La Foce, a Tuscan no-man's land bracketed by foreign invasion and civil war. "The Marchesa Origo's faithful record is one of those precious and rare accounts that give the truth of history with the art of a gifted writer, that bears witness nobly to ignoble times" (Helen Wolff)

#### **Other books by Iris Origo include:**

*Leopardi, A Study in Solitude*

*The Last Attachment*

*The Merchant of Prato. Francesco di Marco Datini 1335-1410*

*A Need to Testify*

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