

## Cellist Mario Brunello embraces Bach's repertoire in a pictorial odyssey at the National Gallery



**LUNCHTIME CONCERTS: Thurs 14 September, Tues 24 October and Thurs 7 December at 1pm**

**Cellist Mario Brunello**, former first prize winner of the Tchaikovsky Competition in 1986, embarks on a series of lunchtime concerts at the **National Gallery** from **14 September to 7 December**, with art historian **Guido Beltramini**, director of the Andrea Palladio International Centre for Architectural Studies. Choosing three paintings by Botticini, Holbein and Conegliano at the National Gallery, Brunello has devised three programmes to explore three individual themes - resonance, enigma and distance. For the second concert on 24 October, Brunello explores the idea of an enigma at the heart of Holbein's *Ambassadors* – the skull placed between the Ambassadors only visible from certain angles – through Bach's Partita No.2 for violin but on a violoncello piccolo.

Brunello has specifically not chosen historical or anecdotal references from the paintings to devise the concert programmes. Instead he has chosen a more philosophical approach, which extends his quest for a third dimension. The opening concert in particular picks up on the vortex in the *Assumption of the Virgin* with the heavenly bodies assembled in concentric rings. Choosing the theme of resonance, Brunello marries this heavenly vortex with the circular structure in Bach's Suite No. 6 in particular the Prelude, Sarabande and joyous garland of chants in the Gavotte and Gigue. Contemporary music through Sollima's Concerto Rotondo continues the spherical theme.

The idea of a third dimension has been at the heart of Mario Brunello's fascination with silence as the dichotomy of music. He has searched for this lost dimension in everyday life through his *Sounds of the Dolomites Festival* and his book *Silence*. For Brunello, silence is far more than a void - it can be tense, charged, emotionally provocative, reflecting the audience's voiceless anticipation as in a concert hall. The silence in a concert hall or outside on a mountaintop creates very different contexts for listening to music. As Mario explains, "The search for silence highlights the sounds. It enhances them. Silence is an important element in making music three-dimensional. Music usually passes in front of us like a two-dimensional strip. You have time, and you have sound. But the element giving depth to these two elements is silence. I would like to try and achieve a three-dimensional form of listening to music."

**Thursday 14 September 2017 at 1pm - Room 57**

## RESONANCE



The Assumption of the Virgin (probably about 1475-6) by Francesco Botticini

J.S. Bach Cello Suite n 6 in D major BWV 1012

G. Sollima Concerto Rotondo, violoncello and live electronics

G. Colombi Ciaccona, violoncello and loop

The series begins with Resonance. Brunello has chosen works which mirror the circular pantheon of Botticini's *Assumption of the Virgin* which was painted between 1475 and 1477. Colombi's Chaconne, the earliest known manuscript for the cello, is spherical in form with the same phrase returning to the beginning. There is an Eastern quality to whirling sounds in Sollima's contemporary piece Concerto Rotondo.

Colombi - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=basXE93SfPs>

Botticini was a painter in the second half of the Florentine Quattrocento. In Botticini's painting, the angels are arranged in concentric circles. At the edges of the painting, the heavenly figures continue in the strongly foreshortened view: we only see half of the last circle. What inspired Botticini to invent this extraordinary vortex, which radically changes the neat straight rows of the celestial hierarchy seen in early depictions of heaven? The huge dome for the Duomo in Florence had been completed some fifteen years previously. The Brunelleschi Dome was an unprecedented space that even rivalled the Pantheon in Rome in terms of size. In addition to rotating half spheres hanging from the high roof trusses of the church, the stage set included God and Christ with concentric rows of singing angels.

**Tuesday 24 October 2017 at 1pm - Room 4**

## ENIGMA



The Ambassadors (1533) by Hans Holbein the Younger

H.I.F. Biber	“Passacaglia” from Mystery Sonatas
J.S. Bach	Allemande, Partita n. 2 in d minor BWV 1004
B.A. Zimmermann	Four short studies n.1
J.S. Bach	Courante, Partita n.2 in d minor BWV 1004
B.A. Zimmermann	Four short studies n. 2
J.S. Bach	Sarabande, Partita n. 2 in d minor BWV 1004
B.A. Zimmermann	Four short studies n.3
J.S. Bach	Gigue, Partita n.2 in d minor BWV 1004
B.A. Zimmermann	Four short studies n.4
J.S. Bach	“Ciaccona”, Partita n.2 in D minor BWV 1004

Brunello, who will be performing the programme on the Violoncello Piccolo, has chosen to explore the idea of enigmas in music with Bach’s Chaconne in Partita No.2, which conceals melodies of Bach’s chorales.

Mario Brunello, who normally performs on a Maggini cello from 17<sup>th</sup> Century, has spent 30 years exploring the Bach Cello Suites, deconstructing them and re-imagining them through the prism of multi-media presentations and even performing them in a desert and a mountain summit at his annual festival in the Dolomites. Now he has expanded his Bach odyssey to the violin repertoire – performing Bach’s Violin Partitas and Sonatas on a smaller cello with an extended range. The violoncello piccolo has 5 strings as opposed to the 4 on the cello and violin. The cello’s smaller prototype is an octave below a violin and has a larger range than a normal cello. Brunello’s copy of an Amati violoncello piccolo incorporates an additional E string, as found on a violin. He is exploring Bach’s complete violin masterworks in a series of concerts in Venice at the Squero at Fondazione Cini and the National Gallery concert on 24 October is an opportunity to listen to at least one Violin Partita.

Demonstration of the Violoncello Piccolo: <https://youtu.be/u9xcrwwQNiA>

## Thursday 7 December 2017 at 1pm - Rooms 61 and 60



### ***DISTANCE***

*The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (c. 1502-4) by Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano

J.S. Bach Suite n. 5 in C minor BWV 1011

J. Cage 4,33

M. Weinberg Sonata n.1 op 72

Brunello was particularly taken by the depiction of Christ in a simple undecorated chapel with windows on a beautiful landscape behind, and the contrast of being on the inside or isolated on the outside. Bach’s 5th Suite is very different from the others- in particular its abstract Sarabande with its absence of harmony. As Brunello explains, “I chose Weinberg’s Sonata No,1 because of Weinberg’s personal story as an outcast from society as a Jew and also his self-inflicted isolation during the communist era”.

## **Mario BRUNELLO**

***“Mario Brunello is at one with his instrument, a Maggini cello from 1600.***

***His mastery of the cello is effortless and passionate, releasing both the dark moaning and the treble pitched jubilee with angelic tones.”***

Monika Willer, Westfalen Post – KLAVIERFESTIVALRUHR (05/2017)

Expressive freedom arises naturally whenever Mario Brunello makes music. It flows from his openness to every emotion, giving life to interpretations of striking honesty and individuality. The Italian cellist, equally at home as concerto soloist, chamber musician and originator of pioneering projects, has captivated audiences worldwide and attracted international critical acclaim. His artistry has been praised by Gramophone for its ‘great spirit’ and described as ‘intense and passionate’ by The Strad.

Mario Brunello was born in 1960 at Castelfranco Veneto in northern Italy. The surrounding countryside and nature of the Treviso region have proved enduring inspirations for the cellist’s music-making, touching everything from his feeling for rubato to his fascination with the interdependence of sound and silence. He is particularly drawn to mountains and deserts for the meditative stillness of these remote places. As artistic director of *I Suoni delle Dolomiti* since 1994, Brunello has invented performances in the peaks and valleys of the Dolomites, some at an altitude of over 2,000 meters.

Brunello’s 2017-18 season highlights include Dvořák’s Cello Concerto with Myung-Whun Chung at the Teatro alla Scala, a tour of Japan with Akiko Suwanai and Boris Berezovsky, and Schumann’s Cello Concerto with Vasily Petrenko at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and Gustavo Gimeno and the RAI Orchestra in Turin. He is set to return to NHK Tokyo to perform Schnittke’s Cello Concerto No. 1 with Tadaaki Otaka, and will give the world premiere of Justė Janulytė’s *Midnight Sun* for cello and orchestra with the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra at the 2017 Vilnius Festival. Brunello’s forthcoming schedule also includes a return to Yerevan to perform Mansurian’s Cello Concert with the State Orchestra of Armenia. He will join Kremerata Baltica in the dual role of soloist and conductor, and explore J.S. Bach’s Cello Suites and Solo Sonatas and Partitas (the latter on cello piccolo) in recitals in London, Venice, Florence and Bologna.

The breakthrough in his career came in 1986 when he became the first and only Italian ever to win the coveted International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. His success was built on studies with Adriano Vendramelli at the Conservatorio di Musica Benedetto Marcello di Venezia and with Antonio Janigro, among the last century’s finest cello teachers. Brunello’s heartfelt playing has won the admiration of leading conductors, Antonio Pappano, Valery Gergiev, Claudio Abbado, Semyon Bychkov, Riccardo Chailly, Daniele Gatti, Vladimir Jurowski, Riccardo Muti, Yuri Temirkanov and Myung-Whun Chung among them.

He has performed as concerto soloist with many of the world’s foremost ensembles, including the London Philharmonic and London Symphony Orchestras, the Mariinsky Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic and Munich Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France and Deutsches Sinfonie Orchester Berlin, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and NHK Symphony Tokyo, and the Filarmonica della Scala and Accademia di Santa Cecilia. Claudio Abbado invited Brunello to perform as soloist with the Lucerne Festival Orchestra and Mozart Orchestra on several occasions.

Over the past three decades Mario Brunello has forged a series of fruitful chamber music partnerships. He has often worked with Gidon Kremer, Frank-Peter Zimmermann, Isabelle Faust, Vadim Repin, Yuri Bashmet, Martha Argerich, Maurizio Pollini, Borodin Quartet, Alban Berg Quartet and cultivated a long-lasting duo collaboration with the pianist Andrea Lucchesini. At the invitation of Gidon Kremer, Brunello is honoured to be resident artist of Kremerata Baltica, with whom he collaborates as soloist and conductor.

His all-encompassing artistic passions and innate curiosity have generated special projects that cross genres and disciplines, such as musical theatre with Alessandro Baricco and Marco Paolini, collaborations with singer-songwriters Vinicio Capossela and Gianmaria Testa, and jazz concerts with Uri Caine, Paolo Fresu, John Surman and Norma Winstone. Many of his most innovative projects were born at Antiruggine ('rust-proofing'), a former Castelfranco Veneto iron foundry transformed by Brunello into a laboratory for exploring creative dialogues with literature, philosophy, science, visual arts and multimedia ([link](#)), and at Arte Sella, a unique open-air museum of natural art, of whose music season he is artistic director.

The cellist has embraced new audiences with his fresh approaches to communication and determination to take artistic risks. Bach has held Brunello's full attention and artistic research for many years, leading him to make two recordings of the composer's Six Cello Suites. He plans to tour his unique three-concert programme in 2018-19 comprising Bach's Suites for solo cello and Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin, performing the former on his cherished Maggini cello, built around 1600, and the latter on violoncello piccolo, on which Brunello will also play Bach and Vivaldi compositions for two violins with violinist Giuliano Carmignola.

The wide range of Mario Brunello's interests is reflected in his substantial discography. The Brunello Series, on the EGEA label, includes Odusia, a musical odyssey through Mediterranean culture; Violoncello and, complete with works for solo cello, cello and choir, and cello and electronics; Taverner's The Protecting Veil with Kremerata Baltica; Vivaldi's Cello Concertos; and a double-disc set of Bach's Cello Suites (which received the prestigious Italian Critics' Award 2010). His many other outstanding albums include recordings of Beethoven's Triple Concerto with Claudio Abbado for Deutsche Grammophon, Dvořák's Cello Concerto with Antonio Pappano for Warner Classics, and a live video recording from the Salle Pleyel in Paris of Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No.2 with Valery Gergiev.

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