

**Jessica Duchen brings her latest novel
Ghost Variations to life
in a series of concerts exploring the mysterious
circumstances surrounding Schumann's lost Violin Concerto**

"Gripping...moving and uplifting" –

BBC Music Magazine, Book Choice of the Month, 2017



23 October 2017 - LONDON

Live at Zédel

2 November 2017 - BROMSGROVE

Artrix Arts Centre

**19 November 2017 – HAMPSTEAD,
LONDON NW3**

Burgh House

2 January 2018 - PEMBROKESHIRE

Lampeter House, Narberth

22 February 2018 – LEICESTER

Leicester Classical Lunchtime Concerts

David La Page *violin*

Viv McLean *piano*

Jessica Duchen *author/narrator*

Schumann *Geistervariationen (Theme)*

Bartók *Romanian Folk Dances*

Schumann *Violin Sonata No.1 in A minor (first movement)*

Mendelssohn: *Violin Concerto (second movement)*

F S Kelly *Gigue from Serenade Op. 7*

Brahms arr. Joachim *Hungarian Dance No.2*

Ravel *Tzigane*

Hubay *Hejre Kati*

Schumann *Violin Concerto (second movement)*

Schumann *Geistervariationen (Theme)*

Author Jessica Duchen presents her latest novel "*Ghost Variations*" - about the mysterious rediscovery of Schumann's suppressed Violin Concerto - in a series of concerts with violin and piano duo **David Le Page** and **Viv McLean**. Marking the 80th anniversary of the modern premiere of Schumann's Violin Concerto, the tour kicks off in London at the cabaret venue **Crazy Coqs** at **Brasserie Zédel** off Piccadilly Circus on 23 October, followed by intimate salon concerts at **Burgh House** in Hampstead and **Lampeter House** in Pembrokeshire alongside concert venues in **Bromsgrove** and **Leicester**.



Ghost Variations is a fictionalised retelling of the rediscovery of Schumann's lost Violin Concerto and the battle for its belated premiere. Schumann composed the concerto for the famous violinist Joseph Joachim in 1853 shortly before his attempted suicide. Schumann's widow, Clara, made the decision with Joachim not to publish the work, though Brahms later used a motif from it. They blocked its premiere on the grounds that it might betray signs of Schumann's worsening mental health. The manuscript was subsequently deposited in the Prussian State Library with instructions not to be performed for 100 years. It remained undiscovered until Joachim's grand-niece, the famous Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Arányi, supposedly received a mysterious communication through a Ouija board in which the spirit of the great composer asked her to find and play his long-suppressed work. Following the manuscript's rediscovery in 1933, a struggle ensued to secure the first performance.

The rising star violinist Yehudi Menuhin wished to give the modern world premiere himself, though Jelly d'Aranyi claimed the moral right to the first performance for herself on the basis of rediscovering the existence of the concerto. Duchén's book explores how the Third Reich asserted its dominance over the concerto for its own nationalist motives, trumping both d'Aranyi and Menuhin, the greatest violin prodigy of the day. The Nazi government in Germany in the 1930s seized on the idea that this could be a new German violin concerto to replace the Mendelssohn – which they had banned on racial grounds – and dictated that the German violinist Georg Kulenkampff give the world premiere on 26 November 1937 with the Berlin Philharmonic. Jelly d'Aranyi, whose formerly illustrious career was dipping at that stage, made history in giving the first London performance of the concerto in 1938, three weeks before Menuhin played the work in the same venue.

Jessica Duchén piloted the "concert of the novel" at the Hungarian Cultural Centre, London, in March 2016. It has since been performed at St Mary's Perivale, the Bob Boas Foundation, the Kensington & Chelsea Music Society and the Barnes Music Society, among other venues. Jessica has toured two previous novel-concerts, including "*Hungarian Dances*", which has been performed all over the country since 2009, and "*Alicia's Gift*" which has also been heard at numerous music societies and festivals, was performed at Wigmore Hall in 2016, and is at Barnes Music Society on 20 November 2017.



"The 'Ghost Variations' concert seemed a natural extension of the book. It's a wonderful way to bring the story of the extraordinary violinist Jelly d'Arányi to life, as every piece has a connection with her. Moreover, I've found that the format has the extra benefit of being 100 per cent accessible. Nobody unfamiliar with the music need feel disadvantaged, as it becomes an integral part of the story, which draws people in and also sheds light on the pieces and the personalities behind them." Jessica Duchén



The concert programme for *Ghost Variations* explores many different aspects of Jelly d'Aranyi's life, family and friends. Hubay was her teacher, Bartók was a close friend, Ravel wrote his *Tzigane* for her, Joachim was her great-uncle, F S Kelly was her lost love, killed in World War I. She was a regular exponent of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto.

"*Ghost Variations* was unusual – and all the more remarkable for that – with a perfect balance between words and music. Friends of KCMS and some new subscribers all commented on how much they enjoyed the occasion. The story line is compelling. Add to that the musicianship of David and Viv, both such dazzling performers, and so engaging in their interaction, that you have a production of unique and distinctive quality that makes it unmissable. It deserves full houses across the land!"

– Peter Thomas, artistic director, Kensington & Chelsea Music Society

"Schumann's lost concerto and a virtuoso femme fatale keep you gripped and guessing in *Ghost Variations*. Set in 1930s London, this musical mystery by Jessica Duchen strikes a hot-blooded tune with grace notes from beyond the grave... Duchen's orchestration of such intrigue merits great applause." – *The Jewish Chronicle*, 21 April 2017

Jessica Duchen



After studying music at Cambridge and piano with Joan Havill at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Jessica Duchen worked as an editor in music publishing and magazines for ten years, then went freelance to concentrate on writing.

Her journalism has appeared in *The Independent*, *The Guardian* and *The Sunday Times*, as well as *BBC Music Magazine*, *Opera News* and numerous other journals.

Jessica's first books were biographies of the composers Erich Wolfgang Korngold and Gabriel Fauré. Her first opera libretto is for 'Silver Birch', composed by Roxanna Panufnik and commissioned by Garsington Opera for premiere in 2017 ("Jessica Duchen's libretto is powerful and poetic and Roxanna Panufnik's music busy and imaginative... a nonstop hour-long drama that is cinematic in its scope and fluidity" – *Richard Morrison, The Times*, **4 stars**)

As well as ***Ghost Variations***, Jessica has written four previous novels. Often they focus on the tensions and cross-currents between family generations, ranging from a painful exploration of the effects of anorexia (***Rites of Spring***) and the rearing of a child prodigy (***Alicia's Gift***) to the long-term effects of displacement and cultural clashes (***Hungarian Dances*** and ***Songs of Triumphant Love***). Music is a recurring theme and in 2009 the celebrated violin and piano duo Philippe Graffin and Claire Désert recorded a CD inspired by ***Hungarian Dances***, designed as a companion to the novel (on Onyx Classics).

Jessica frequently appears as narrator in concert versions of her novels ***Ghost Variations***, ***Hungarian Dances*** (both with violin and piano) and ***Alicia's Gift*** (with solo piano). *Alicia's Gift* and *Hungarian Dances* have been performed at the Buxton Festival, Ulverston Festival, Wimbledon International Music Festival, The Chopin Society, Darlington Concert Society, Fishguard Festival, Potton Hall, PenFRO Literary Festival, Clapham Omnibus, Wensleydale Concert Series, Helmsley Arts Centre, The Sage Gateshead, and the Wigmore Hall where *Alicia's Gift* was attended by a near-capacity audience aged from 3 to 93.

David Le Page



David Le Page was born in Guernsey and began learning the violin at the age of seven. He gained a place at the Yehudi Menuhin School, aged twelve, where he studied with Margaret Norris. He was a prize winner in both the BBC Young Musician of the Year and the Yehudi Menuhin competition and completed his studies in Bern with Igor Ozim and in London with Sidney Griller. David has worked with a diverse selection of artists and ensembles. He is director of The Harborough Collective and has formed his own groups the Le Page Ensemble, Mysterious Barricades and Subway Piranhas.. David has recorded and released a number of albums featuring his own material including 'Metamorphosis' (2016) which features his radical reworking of Beethoven's 'Eroica' symphony, Bach's Tocatta and Fugue and Joy Division's 'New Dawn Fades'. David is artistic director of the successful Harborough Concerts series. He is currently President of the European String Teachers Association. David plays on a 1874 violin made by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume.

[Full biography here](#)

Viv McLean



Winner of the First Prize at the 2002 Maria Canals International Piano Competition in Barcelona, Viv McLean has performed at all the major venues in the UK as well as throughout Europe, Japan, Australia and the USA. Viv's concerto work includes appearances with world renowned orchestras. His commercial releases include recordings for such labels as Sony Classical Japan, Naxos, Nimbus and the RPO label. Viv has performed chamber music with internationally leading groups and has performed at festivals around the World. Since 2013 he has been pianist-in-residence at the Glossop Music Festival.

[Full biography here](#)

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