



JAM
YEAR IN REVIEW
2023



Music of Our Time

The year started when JAM presented its annual *Music of Our Time* concert, at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street. This concert gave us the opportunity to perform JAM commissions, by **Tara Creme** (2023) and **Daniel Saleeb** (2019), a co-commission with Onyx Brass by **Mark-Anthony Turnage** (2023) and five successful submissions from JAM's *Call for Music* which remains at the very heart of JAM's remit of enabling emerging composers. Performing *Soliloquy* by Saleeb was a particular joy, as we premiered the work at JAM on the Marsh in 2019, with the intention of bringing it to London in the 2020 *Music of Our Time* concert, which was delayed by Covid. The successful submissions included composers **Simon Beattie**, **Kerensa Briggs**, **David Knotts**, **James Mitchell** and **Pia Rose Scattergood**. Another highlight was giving the world premiere of *The Song I Came to Sing* by Tara Creme, winner of last year's President's Commission.

During *Music of Our Time*, JAM was able to honour and recognise one of the hardest working members of the JAM Team, **Sarah Armitage**. As Head of Marketing and Fundraising, Sarah is the most critical part of JAM, as she is responsible for raising the money needed for JAM's remit. With funding ever harder in the arts, JAM would not be able to achieve all that it does without Sarah's enormous input. In recognition of this, she was presented with the President's Award by JAM's President, **Paul Meador**.

Masterclass Series

JAM's dynamic Masterclass Series, started in 2021, was created to help composers better understand how to write for certain forces. Our aim was to make this series an inspirational, interactive composition course aimed at emerging UK-based composers of any age. In 2021, we supported composers in how to write for brass quintet and organ with Onyx Brass, organist Francesca Massey and composer, Paul Mealor. 2022's Masterclass Series was led by VOCES8, Paul Mealor and John Frederick Hudson in choral writing.

For 2023 we reinvented the wheel, by significantly enlarging our opportunity for budding composers and offering them the chance of writing for strings. Firstly, we recorded 22 videos at the VOCES8 Centre with the Sacconi Quartet, written and presented by John Frederick Hudson. These videos, free to view, are on jamconcert.org as a digital resource for composers and have garnished thousands of views from all over the world.

Secondly, we created a free, residential course for composers for the duration of JAM on the Marsh. With a large number of submissions for the course, the four selected composers (Cameron Biles-Liddell, Christopher Churcher, Isabelle Ryder, Jago Thornton) were tutored by composers **Paul Mealor**, **Gabriel Jackson** and **John Frederick Hudson**, conductor **Nicholas Cleobury**, violinist **Ruth Rogers** and the **Sacconi Quartet**. They were immersed in an exciting and intensive composition experience, with free access to all festival events. For nearly two weeks they composed. The course culminated when the Sacconi Quartet gave the premiere of four string quartets, written during the festival, on the



It was fascinating, enjoyable, insightful, and I achieved my aim of improving my string writing.

- COMPOSER





JAM on the Marsh

The festival ran from 4 to 16 July including three theatre productions, four exhibitions with *Meet the Artist* sessions, 13 concerts and 11 free events. Almost all the ticketed concerts were sold out. It is fair to say that Nicholas Cleobury's first programme as Festival Curator created a real buzz with our audience. Post-Covid, it remains both a joy and an honour to welcome large, overjoyed audiences to live performances and events. The 2023 audience numbers were larger than ever before.

JAM is a great supporter of new music and a believer in collaboration amongst art organisations. As such, the '23 festival started in a way that connected both: a collaboration with **Changeling Theatre** in commissioning the music for their productions of *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The School for Scandal* from composer **James Aburn**. Changeling's tour of both plays started in New Romney as part of JAM on the Marsh and were performed across Kent, Sussex, Surrey and London. In between these excellent productions we hosted **Marginalia's** charming new production of Humperdinck's opera, *Hansel and Gretel* at St George's, Ivychurch. Their brilliantly abridged performance featured a clever new translation by the company, which made the show pacy and great fun.

The first weekend started with a pre-concert *Meet the Artist* session with **Wendy Carrig**, one of the most in-demand photographers in the UK. She introduced the audience to her astonishing exhibition, *Washed Up*, inspired by 'treasure' that she has retrieved from the Romney



Top to Bottom:
JAM Sinfonia conducted by Nicholas Cleobury
The Trout Quintet with pianist Anna Tilbrook (left)
Simon and Saoko Blendis (right)

On Sunday afternoon, festival favourite and former Curator, **Anna Tilbrook** joined the **Sacconi Quartet** for Jonathan Dove's wonderful *Piano Quintet*, followed by the familiar tones of Schubert's *The Trout Quintet*, rounding off a fantastic first four days.

On Tuesday, **Simon Blendis** performed his second concert of three this year, having led the JAM Sinfonia on Saturday and soon to lead the London Mozart Players later in the festival. His wonderful performance of the music of Max Jaffa, the pre-eminent light music violinist of his generation, was preceded by another *Meet the Artist* slot, this time by the painter, **John Ballard**, talking about his large-scale oils of the beaches, groins and water-breaks of the Romney Bay. Simon, playing Jaffa's violin, was accompanied by his wife Saoko, starting an extraordinary run of music that only happens at JAM on the Marsh. From one intimate venue (St Dunstan's, Snargate) to another.

I was blown away to hear such incredible musicians outside London. Thank you for the best concert of my year !

Following Simon's concert we moved to St Clement's, Old Romney one of the Marsh's smallest venues, to hear one of the finest guitarists in the world, **Craig Ogden**. Craig's programme moved from the 16th century to the 20th century, featuring some of the finest music ever written. Prior to Craig's concert we had our final *Meet the Artist* session, when **Penny Graham** introduced the audience to her amazing pottery, inspired by the Hubble and James Webb telescopes' view of outer space.

The **Delaware Choral Scholars** was the third of this mid-week sandwich, a concert that few in the audience will forget. The 60-voice choir, under the direction of **Paul Head** and accompanied by **Simon Hogan** (organ) and **Lori Geckle** (piano) nearly lifted the roof off St Leonard's, Hythe. Spanning music from the UK and US, Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb* was the pivot to this concert, with music by Paul Mealor and Jonathan Dove on one side and Morten Lauridsen on the other. Also included was a world premiere of *Evening Star* by **Christopher Churcher**, who won the President's Commission in 2022. Then, the jaw-dropping finale showcased five American Spirituals and Gospel Songs. Few will ever



The final three days were 'JAM-packed' with extraordinary events, starting with *The Sky Engine*, JAM's biggest commission to date. This astonishing community oratorio was the brainchild of **Richard Peat** and librettist, **Timothy Knapman**, tackling one of the world's biggest issues, climate change. The **Canterbury Cathedral Choir** joined forces with children from two Marsh primary schools, 20 members of our local community became an orchestra with the **London Mozart Players**, the story was told by opera singers, **Rebecca Afonwy-Jones** and **Julian Close**, and narrator **Kudzanayi Chiwawa**, whilst conductor **Michael Bawtree** controlled the massed performers (over 100) with aplomb. St Nicholas, New Romney has never experienced such a spectacular and powerful event knitting the community with professionals from across the UK.

"The Sky Engine just transported us - an amazing community project with stunning input from the professionals and with joy written on all the faces."

- AUDIENCE MEMBER

Top to Bottom:
Canterbury Cathedral Boys Choir

Saxophone soloist (*left*)
Composer Richard Peat taking a bow (*right*)





Tenor Nicky Spence singing Noël Coward

It might have been difficult to follow the heights of the week, but in Nicholas Cleobury's hands, the programming for the final two days was never in doubt. Saturday had four events, starting with the fantastic opportunity of having the **Sacconi Quartet** premiere four string quartets written by the composers from JAM's first residential course: **Cameron Biles-Liddell, Christopher Churcher, Isabelle Ryder** and **Jago Thorton**. All four new pieces were exceptionally good, approaching the forces in four different ways; all the composers deserve our praise and our thanks for their wonderful new works.

As 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of Noël Coward's death, his latest biographer, **Oliver Soden** joined us for the other three events, hosting a lunch at The Bell Inn next to St George's, Ivychurch for those that wanted an insight into Coward, and then compering a brilliant concert in the church by the tenor, **Nicky Spence** and pianist **Dylan Perez** of some of Coward's greatest music. This was a wonderful canter through Coward's life and work.

It's the friendly, welcoming and inclusive atmosphere in combination with the unique and historic locations in which it is held that makes this festival so very, very special.



The final concert of the day was given by the **London Mozart Players** under **Nicholas Cleobury**. This beautifully crafted programme covered the late 19th century to present day from Elgar, Barber and Vaughan Williams to a 2019 JAM commission from **James Aburn**. The highlight of the evening was introduced by Oliver Soden, as he is also a biographer of Sir Michael Tippett; the *Fantasia Concertante on a Theme of Corelli*, one of the conductor's favourite pieces. Many commented that they had never heard JAM regulars, the London Mozart Players, on better form.

Susan Pilcher has been a massive supporter of JAM over many years. She has photographed almost all our recent events and has had multiple photography exhibitions in the festival. In recognition of all that she has given to JAM, Paul Mealor presented her with the President's Award, the first to be given during JAM on the Marsh.

After the power and angst of the previous night, the final concert was a joyous celebration of all things Baroque. **Julian Perkins** and **Sounds Baroque** returned to the festival after a break of a few years with brilliant additions, **Anna Cavaliero** (soprano) and **Katie Lodge** (trumpet). A sea of wonderful music, playing and singing from Bach, Handel, Purcell and Vivaldi washed over the packed audience of St Leonard's, Hythe, bringing the festival to a triumphant close.

JAM on the Marsh : VIRTUAL

Reaching a world-wide audience

With live audiences very much back to full capacity, JAM presented edited highlights of the festival from 11 to 25 September as a virtual offering to people who were unable to join us in July, or for those who wanted to revisit some of the concerts and all the exhibitions. Sixteen different videos were released, including the whole of Richard Peat's *The Sky Engine*. The latter was a joyous opportunity to see this wonderful community oratorio again. The full virtual offering was offered to the public free of charge, bringing music and the arts to a wider community.



Brilliant production, sound and visuals. I watched lots of arts online during lockdown, but not much since. I watch JAM VIRTUAL, because it's so good.

- ONLINE VIEWER

Looking ahead to 2024

Music of Our Time

Wednesday, 20 March, 7:30pm
St Bride's Church, Fleet Street

The Chapel Choir of Selwyn College, Cambridge
Onyx Brass
Simon Hogan (organ)
Michael Bawtree (conductor)

Music to include submissions from JAM's *Call for Music*

JAM on the Marsh

4 - 14 July 2024

Romney Marsh, Kent
(less than an hour from London)

Curated by Nicholas Cleobury

2024 Festival highlights include:

Mark Padmore CBE (tenor) and Ben Goldscheider (horn)
join the London Mozart Players

Changeling Theatre productions of
Present Laughter (Coward) and *Henry V* (Shakespeare)

Canterbury Cathedral Choir and London Mozart Players perform
Fauré's *Requiem*

Four exhibitions including mixed media painting, photography and installations

Jarman, a one-man play remembering Derek Jarman 30 years after his death

Aki Blendis (BBC Young Musician Finalist) and the Festival Orchestra perform
Vaughan William's *The Lark Ascending*

Nicholas Cleobury's last concert as Festival Curator conducting
Mahler's *Symphony 4*

Left to Right:
Edward Armitage
Claudia Ott
Paul Mealor
Sarah Armitage
John Frederick Hudson

THANK YOU

As recent events have shown, financial support for the arts gets ever harder. Without your generosity JAM could not enable new art and music, education projects, support performers and artists, and give first-class performances, events, and exhibitions to our audience.
Thank you for continuing to support JAM this year.

Paul Mealor
OSTJ CLJ OSS FRSA
President of JAM

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JAM Team

Edward Armitage BEM: Artistic Director
Sarah Armitage: Head of Marketing & Fundraising
John Frederick Hudson, PhD: Head of Operations
Claudia Ott: Communications Manager

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