

ECHO RISING STARS



Town Hall Symphony Hall's long-standing commitment to developing and supporting young musicians includes being a founder member of the European Concert Hall Organisation. Since 1995, ECHO's Rising Stars scheme has been bringing exceptional young artists to new international audiences, offering professional development support and a concert tour of the most prestigious halls in Europe, including Town Hall and Symphony Hall which is a founder member.

The artists presented in the Rising Stars series are the best in their chosen field and are hand-selected by the artistic directors of ECHO member halls. They are offered unparalleled performance opportunities to present programmes of their own choice in a major European recital tour. Principal participating halls include the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam; Philharmonie, Cologne; Cité de la musique, Paris; Musikverein and Konzerthaus, Vienna; Barbican and Town Hall and Symphony Hall, Birmingham.

Each Rising Star also has a new work commissioned for them as part of the series. Composers whose works are being premiered during the 2017/18 season include Péter Eötvös, Edith Canat de Chizy, Stewart Copeland, Katarina Leyman, Christoph Ehrenfellner and Morris Kliehuis. Composers

who have written works for ECHO Rising Stars in recent past seasons include Olga Neuwirth, Wolfgang Rihm, Nico Muhly, Kimmo Hakola and Johanna Doderer.

As the artists undertake their tours they also engage with and deliver education, learning and participation work with diverse communities across the ECHO network. Earlier this season at THSH, Quatuor van Kuijk captivated parents and children alike with a unique free interactive workshop for 0-5 year olds.

ECHO organises a series of workshops for the artists to support their wider personal and professional development and to explore shared questions and goals amongst this generation of artists across Europe.

Among many former Rising Stars are pianists Igor Levit and Khatia Buniatishvili, violinists Janine Jansen and Priya Mitchell, cellists Daniel Müller-Schott and Quirine Viersen, the Belcea and Pavel Haas Quartets, singers Jonathan Lemalu and Benjamin Appl and organist David Goode.

For further information on Rising Stars and this season's artists, please visit www.concerthallorganisation.eu

DI XIAO



Earlier this month, the international pianist Di Xiao was named one of Birmingham City University's Alumni of the Year receiving her award at a ceremony on 9 January in Symphony Hall.

THSH has been a passionate supporter of Didi – as she is affectionately known – for over a decade since her success in the 2007 Brant International Piano Competition at Symphony Hall. She was nominated by Andrew Jowett, former Director of Symphony Hall, as the UK's representative for the 2008/9 ECHO Rising Stars. With free use of Symphony Hall's piano to practice and rehearse, THSH also assembled its Development team to secure funding from the George Cadbury Trust, Peter and Jane How Trust, Middlemore Education Foundation, The Rowlands Trust and the Rotary Club of Birmingham to support Di whilst she was a Rising Star.

From humble beginnings (her father sold his motorbike – the family's only transport – to buy her a piano when she was two), Di rose through the Conservatoires of Guangzhou, Odessa and Beijing, graduating from the latter with one of the highest marks in its history. Whilst still at Beijing she was talent spotted by the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and offered a scholarship. "Looking back," says Di, "it was a turning point in my life."

Since then she has released four albums, appeared on radio and TV in the UK and China and developed a performing career which takes her across Europe and Asia. She aims to be an international ambassador of the piano, combining both Chinese and Western repertoire in her concerts and creating a bridge between the two cultures. She also remains involved with the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, which is part of Birmingham City University, as a piano tutor.

On finding out she had been selected for the award, Di Xiao said, "I feel very honoured indeed to be chosen as Alumni of the Year. I also feel very lucky and grateful for all the University has done for me and the opportunities it has exposed me to. I arrived as a student over a decade ago and now, as an Honorary Member of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, I am part of this big family and I will endeavour to share its positive spirit with as many people and students as I can because I know that, apart from the amazing facilities that we now have, it's always the people that make a place special. I shall never take that responsibility lightly."