

WEDNESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER

JS BACH

COMPLETE CELLO SUITES

SÆUNN THORSTEINSDÓTTIR

SHEKU KANNEH-MASON

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COMPLETE CELLO SUITES**

Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir
Sheku Kanneh-Mason

“The Cello Suites had been considered academic works, mechanical without warmth. Imagine that! How could anyone think of them as being cold, when a whole radiance of space and poetry flows from them? They are the very essence of Bach, and Bach is the essence of music.”
– Pablo Casals

PROGRAMME

Johann Sebastian Bach
Six Suites for Cello Solo (1717–1723)

Suite No. 1 in G major
BWV 1007
Sheku Kanneh-Mason

Suite No. 3 in C major
BWV 1009
Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir

Suite No. 5 in C minor
BWV 1011
Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir

Interval (15')

Suite No. 2 in D minor
BWV 1008
Sheku Kanneh-Mason

Suite No. 4 in E \flat major
BWV 1010
Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir

Suite No. 6 in D major
BWV 1012
Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir

In 1889 Pablo Casals - then 13 years old - discovered a bundle of sheet music in a thrift shop in Barcelona – an edition of Bach's Six Cello Suites by (German cellist and composer) Freidrich Grützmacher. Rarely played in public before, it was Casals' subsequent renditions of the suites that would lead to their popularisation in the 20th century, kickstarting their contemporary performance and recording by renowned cellists.

It is difficult to establish an exact chronology of the suites, though they were likely written between 1717–1723, whilst Bach was serving as Kapellmeister ('one responsible for music-making') in Köthen, Germany. Each suite begins with a Prelude (introduction), followed by five movements all based around different dance types: Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Gavott and Gigue.

Speaking profoundly to our age, Bach's supremely human music transcends any sense of current genre and fashion; encapsulating the range of emotional, intellectual and physical experience. Despite being largely unknown in the 200 years following their composition, the Cello Suites have since come to be considered amongst Bach's greatest musical achievements.

We are thrilled to welcome exceptional musicians of the new generation to play this unrivalled music of intimacy and meditation in a most extreme setting.

BOLD TENDENCIES

Acclaimed Icelandic cellist Sæunn Thorstendóttir, making her Concrete Concert Hall debut; and friend of Bold Tendencies Sheku Kanneh-Mason, from whom the idea came to play the Cello Suites in our raw, expansive spaces.

Tonight's event also offers a sonic context for one of this season's Visual Arts Commissions viewable on the rooftop. *After... Bach's Cello Suites (2025)* by Idris Khan is made with countless woodblock stamps dipped in Khan's trademark shade of blue: an expanse of highly detailed, painterly mark-making with nestled rectangles of light and deep blue framed by the limitless depth of the sky's horizon.

Inspired by musical notation from a young age, Khan's mother, a nurse, was a keen pianist, and hearing her play was part of the fabric of his formative years. With sheet music often littered through the house and palpably absent in her later years, *After... Bach's Cello Suites* is as much a celebration of cultural inheritance and the memories we hold as it is a reminder of their inherent frailty; our desire to remember, lost in the waves of a vast, vanishing sea of time.

The interpretation of Bach's Cello Suites are themselves disputed: no original manuscripts exist autographed in Bach's hand. Their presentation here, in Idris Khan's paradoxically silent 'wall of sound' and in Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir and Sheku Kanneh-Mason's live performance, reflects a meditation on translation,

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repetition and memory, collapsing time, space, and authorship into an abstract, universal language perfectly attuned to our 2025 programme theme of *Déjà vu*, eliciting in thought and sense, sight and hearing a deeper, more compulsive sense of the real and our place within it.

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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) was (by far) the most gifted and celebrated member of a great musical dynasty in Germany, of over 50 musicians and composers. Admired by his Baroque contemporaries as an outstanding harpsichordist, organist, and expert on organ building, over 1,000 known compositions are attributed to Bach – these numerous masterpieces of church and instrumental music span concertos, suites, sonatas, fugues, cantatas, masses and Passions. In 1723 he moved to Leipzig to be Kapellmeister at St Thomas Church. Composing groundbreaking compositions for the organ that still form the core of the instrument's repertoire, he occupied the role until his death.

Icelandic cellist **Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir** unites tradition and innovation to create deeply immersive musical experiences. Her most recent recording, *Marrow: The 6 Suites for Solo Cello by J.S. Bach* (2023) was lauded internationally. Sæunn has premiered works by Anna Thorvaldsdóttir, Betsy Jolas and Sofia Gubaidulina; as well as *Gemæltan* (2022), a

new cello concerto written for her by Veronique Vaka. Sæunn is a founding member of Decoda, the Affiliate Ensemble of Carnegie Hall, as well as co-Artistic Director of Tertulia NY, a concert series that reimagines chamber music in intimate, unexpected settings. An alumnus of Ensemble Connect, she has performed at Carnegie Hall and engaged students in New York City's public schools. Transcending genre, her online Music Portal and personalised Soul Resonance Sessions expand upon her classical foundation into improvisation.

Sheku Kanneh-Mason's mission is to make music accessible to all. 25/26 season highlights include the New York Philharmonic as Artist in Residence; the London Philharmonic on tour; and the world première of Edmund Finnis's Cello Concerto, which was written for him, with the LA Philharmonic. Sheku released *Shostakovich & Britten* (Decca Classics) in May 2025; this follows *Song* (2022) and *Elgar* (2020), which reached No. 8 in the overall Official UK Album Chart, making him the first ever cellist to reach the UK Top 10. A graduate of London's Royal Academy of Music, in May 2022 he was appointed the first Menuhin Visiting Professor of Performance Mentoring. He is a patron of UK Music Masters, and an ambassador for Breakthrough T1D UK and Future Talent. Winner of the 2016 BBC Young Musician competition, Sheku was appointed MBE in 2020. He is the author of two books: *The Power of Music* (2025) and *Little Sheku and the Animal Orchestra* (2025).

Idris Khan's acclaimed practice uses a range of media – from photography to sculpture, painting and moving-image – to explore the intersections of time, memory and the layering of personal and collective experience. Khan's minimalist, often sublime work is known for a continuous interplay of creation, repetition and erasure, drawing from a wealth of sources including religious and theological texts, the history of art and classical music. Gaining prominence for his large-scale composite images that superimpose and obscure layers of source material, such as scores by Frédéric Chopin, pages of the Qur'an or postcards of J.M.W. Turner paintings, Khan's creates contemporary palimpsests that both animate and question principles of cultural inheritance, media saturation, essence and identity.

Bold Tendencies is a not-for-profit arts organisation established in the rooftop spaces of Peckham's Multi-Storey Car Park in 2007. It has transformed a disused building in the heart of South London into an iconic, much-loved place of culture and assembly with spectacular views out over the city and pioneering architecture project Frank's Cafe. Supporting a new generation of creative voices alongside acclaimed international artists, it delivers an ambitious annual programme of Visual Arts, Creative Learning and Live Events open to the public, offering access, participation and enjoyment of the arts for everyone.

UPCOMING LIVE EVENTS

Until Sunday 7 September

The Listening Room — Susan Sontag

We gather LPs and EPs referenced in the works of **Susan Sontag**, alongside portrait photographs, a new interview with her son David Rieff, archival footage, and extracts from her diaries, journals and notebooks. Like her bibliography, Sontag's record collection takes us on a musical journey across geographies and time – from Bach, master of counterpoint, to the elegance and romanticism of Hadyn and Mozart; the soul sensibilities of Dionne Warwick to the skiffle and beat sounds of The Beatles. We commune in ode to the intellectual polymath as a champion of benevolent humanism; a voice whose genre-spanning work continues to reverberate across the decades.

Friday 5 September at 7.30pm

Switched-On Bach — Virtuoso Electronic Performances of Wendy Carlos

The virtuoso **James McVinnie Ensemble** (**James McVinnie**, **Eliza McCarthy**, **Siwan Rhys** and **Hugh Rowlands**) animate the Concrete Concert Hall with works from **Wendy Carlos'** smash hit albums: *Switched-On Bach* (1968) and *The Well-Tempered Synthesizer* (1969). Recorded in Carlos' studio apartment using the then-recently invented Moog synthesiser, *Switched-On Bach* features 10 electronic interpretations of Bach's music, plugged into 20th century machines. Wendy Carlos is the musician who pushed **Robert Moog** to perfect his first analogue synthesiser, from which pop, prog, electronica and film music flourished. These electronic realisations are played here on the Moog SoundLab UK, a portable studio centred around one of the rarest electronic instruments – the

limited edition reissue of the legendary 1960s System Moog 55 Synthesizer.

Sunday 7 September at 7pm

J S Bach — Goldberg Variations

Jean Rondeau, Harpsichord

Jean Rondeau, celebrated contemporary ambassador for his instrument, plays the *Goldberg Variations* (1741) on harpsichord – just as they would have been first played by **Bach's** student and the work's dedicatee, 14-year-old harpsichordist Johann Gottlieb Goldberg. Bach's Goldberg Variations fascinate every generation of musicians. Composed (according to the title page) 'for the soul's delight of music lovers'. Each of the 30 successive variations grows out of the previous one yet unfolds its own individual magic and drama, offering reassurance as well as exhilaration. Demanding, exacting, and filled with glittering, intricate ornaments, the *Goldberg Variations* are equally liberating for player and listener both.

Saturday 13 September at 7pm

Rachmaninoff — The Complete Piano Concertos

Spanning 50 years of **Sergei Rachmaninoff's** 69 year life, the composer's four Piano Concertos are enduringly popular, famous and much-loved in popular culture. We are thrilled to welcome acclaimed Rachmaninoff interpreters – **Ryan Wang**, **Jeneba Kanneh-Mason**, **Boris Giltburg** and **Junyan Chen** – for back-to-back iterations of the four Piano Concertos: rarely performed in this complete form, and never before in the UK. The soloists are joined by the **Philharmonia Orchestra**, returning for a fifth consecutive year of performances, conducted by **Charlotte Corderoy**.

Thursday 18 & Friday 19 September at 7.30pm

Oliver Leith – *Garland* (World Premiere)

Commissioned by Bold Tendencies, *Garland* is new work by **Oliver Leith**, visionary British composer of the new generation. A spectacular procession of sound, music and singing, Leith's most ambitious work to date gathers an orchestra and chorus of more than 120 performers: the amassed forces of **12 Ensemble**, **GBSR Duo**, **EXAUDI**, soprano **Patricia Auchterlonie** and **The Bold Chorus** directed by **Oli Kitching**; conducted by **Naomi Woo** and **Jack Sheen**; with choral refrains written by **Charlie Fox** and costumes designed by **Ellen Poppy Hill**. The choir and orchestra are augmented by a horse and other pedestrian detritus 'played' to create noise and rhythm, enveloping the audience in sound as the performers circulate our Concrete Concert Hall.



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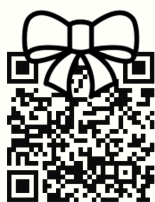
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More and better! We cannot do the work we do without our supporters. Your generosity allows us to bring a world-class Visual Arts, Creative Learning and Live Events programme to Peckham. If you'd like to join the Founding Friends please ask at the Kiosk or email info@boldtendencies.com.