

FREDERICK WAXMAN & **FIGURE ENSEMBLE** are back for more **baroque experiments**

Monday 23, Tuesday 24, Thursday 26 & Saturday 28 Nov – Stone Nest

GLUCK *ORFEO ED EURYDICE*

Hugh Cutting ~ Orfeo

Sofia Kirwan-Baez ~ Eurydice

Anna Dennis ~ Amore

Laura Hounsell ~ Director



"High risk, high reward."

Times

"unequivocally impressive, its sound invigorating, its commitment absolute"

Guardian

Frederick Waxman and FIGURE Ensemble present a fully-staged production of **Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*** across four dates in November at regular venue collaborator Stone Nest. Kathleen Ferrier Award winner **Hugh Cutting** stars in his role as Orpheus, made unforgettable by his award's namesake. Hugh Cutting makes a further appearance alongside artists **Lotte Betts-Dean** and **Charlotte Spruit** as part of Figure's **Bach** series at **LSO St Luke's**, pairing Bach's solo voice and instrumental masterpieces with bold new works by composers including **Jonathan Dove, Oliver Leith, Alex Paxton** and **Freya Waley-Cohen**. After successful live performances this season, **James Larter's *Rhythm of the Seasons*** is released on **Delphian** for Figure's debut album in March 2027. *Rhythm of the Seasons* has audiences swooning in wonderment at Waxman and Larter's multi-percussion reinvention of Vivaldi's iconic *Four Seasons*.



In **Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice***, FIGURE collapses the distance between today's audiences and the people who first heard the work in Vienna in the eighteenth century. The idea grew out of conversations musical director Freddie Waxman had with collaborators Hugh Cutting, who's playing Orfeo, and stage director Laura Hounsell. Hounsell has been exploring new ways of doing opera through her company Bread and Bus Stop, and came up with a more contemporary psychological reading of the story after reading CS Lewis' *A Grief Observed*, also the inspiration behind blockbuster 1993 film **Shadowlands**.

Freddie Waxman said:

A Grief Observed is a book that looks at the nature of grief. Lewis wrote it after his wife Joy Davidman died. It was so intimate and difficult for him to write that at first he published it under a pseudonym. One of the recurring themes was his reluctance to think about his wife, because he worried that every time he brought her to mind, it would dilute his memory of her. Laura's idea was to confront this fear of loss. In her interpretation, the critical point at which Orfeo looks back is no longer a tragic moment, but a necessary stage in facing grief and accepting what's happened. Rather than losing Euridice, he's engaging properly with the fact that she's dead.

Myths like *Orfeo ed Euridice* endure because they often deal with critical turning points in life – often more unflinchingly than modern stories do. All-consuming love, loss, jealousy, and violent revenge are all recurring themes, and the richly symbolic way in which this is expressed leaves them open to a wide range of contemporary interpretations."

FIGURE and Alkanna Graeca also revive their programme **MOURN**, a musical-theatrical exploration of the experience of loss through the rituals of the Balkans and the music of 17th-Century Italy. The performance examines the universal experience of losing a loved one, and the ways of coming to terms with death. Through music and song, the programme unfolds in a series of poetic scenes inspired by ancient funeral traditions kept alive in the Balkans and reimagined in Italy.

In Renaissance Italy, composers drew on Ancient Greek tragedy to invent a new declamatory style that sits between speech and song. The funeral laments that

were woven into those dramas became central to early opera, and the style spread across Europe: the 'lament bass' – a repeating, descending four-note line – was used in Germany by Biber, in France by Lully and, nearly 1000 miles away, in England by Purcell in *Dido's Lament*. Had the Italian composers crossed the Adriatic Sea to the Balkans, they would have found the mourning traditions first immortalised in Ancient Greek tragedy still in active use, forming an unbroken link with the past. There the funeral lament, sung rather than spoken, endured as part of everyday life – delivered outward and upward to a community of the living, the dead, and the divine.

Alkanna Graeca is a vocal trio blending raw folk traditions from the Balkans, Mediterranean, and Black Sea with free improvisation, and whose "spine-tingling harmonies and dissonances have reinvented ancient polyphony for a contemporary audience". MOURN places the imagined tradition of Western Europe and the living tradition of the Balkans in dialogue, reconstructing a ritual of grief.

MOURN features traditional polyphonies from across the Balkans, including Albania, Epirus*, and Thrace**, as well as music composed by Claudio Monteverdi, Barbara Strozzi, and Carlo Gesualdo. The original concept was devised by Alexandra Achillea and Frederick Waxman.



KEY UPCOMING DATES

Thursday 8 – Saturday 10 October @ 7:30pm - Stone Nest
MOURN

Mirangula from Georgia

Passacaille from Lully's opera *Armide*

Janines c'i pane syte from Albania

O vos omnes by Gesualdo

Skaros *

Lamento della ninfa by Monteverdi

Disserratevi abissi from Cesti's opera *L'Argia*

Giati pouli m' den kelaidis **

Lagime mie by Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677)

Vini uara uara i'I of the Vlach people, from across Southeast Europe

Lemonanthous se stolisa *

Mor' Deropolitissa from Epirus*

Lascia ch'io pianga from Handel's opera *Rinaldo* (1685-1759)

Drijema mi se, drijema from Croatoslovenia

Wednesday 4th November @ 7:30pm - LSO St Luke's

Lotte Betts-Dean

Bach BWV 200 *Mein Herze Schwimmt in Blut* with new music from Alex Paxton and Lara Agar

Monday 23, Tuesday 24, Thursday 26 & Saturday 28 Nov at Stone Nest
(timings to be confirmed)

GLUCK ORFEO ED EURYDICE

Starring Hugh Cutting as Orfeo, Sofia Kirwan-Baez as Eurydice and Anna Dennis as Amore, directed by Laura Hounsell.

Saturday 16th January 2027 @ 7:30pm – LSO St Luke's

Hugh Cutting

Bach BWV 179 *Vergnugte Ruh*
new music from Jonathan Dove and Freya Waley-Cohen

Saturday 6th March @ 7:30pm – LSO St Luke's

Charlotte Spruit

Bach BWV 1041 Violin Concerto in A Minor
new music from Isabella Gelis

March 2027

RELEASE OF ALBUM: RHYTHM OF THE SEASONS

with soloist James Larter

Delphian Records, releasing March 2027

"Every one of Vivaldi's familiar imitations, from barking dog to birdsong to drunken dance, sounded different, newly exposed, each vertebra tapped and rattled yet lovingly authentic."

Observer

"The dazzling soloist, James Larter, credited with making the arrangement with [conductor] Frederick Waxman, has stripped the score back to its bones, variously building it again with tuned percussion – vibraphone, marimba – and an array of drums, bongos, gongs, triangles, woodblocks, castanets, chopsticks and, as a ratchety addition, a güiro."

Observer

"An unusual Saturday night but an undeniably glorious one: Figure's aims of producing historically-informed and wholly-accessible classical music are achieved... It is a secular act of worship for the arts, and one I would long to see repeated."

Independent

"Timeless directness and simplicity."

Guardian

“The performance raised hair on the back of the neck.” Independent

Founded by conductor, harpsichordist and composer Frederick Waxman in 2021, **Figure Ensemble** represents a new generation in historically-informed performance practice through immersive experiences that envelope audiences in the context, atmosphere and original passion of the music. Whether staging Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* or reimagining Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* on percussion, Waxman's approach is refreshingly unexpected, playful and never restricted by convention.

Figure is passionate about transporting audiences with the spirit of a composer's original intention finding new ways to connect with and make music accessible to newcomers and seasoned concertgoers alike. It could include fashioning a secular liturgy to accompany a sacred Requiem; reuniting court music with comedic entertainment; or just in the way that the musicians are placed in the space around the audience for maximum immediacy. There is nothing formulaic in their approach.

Their innovative productions have included *Our Mother* (*Stabat Mater*), *This is my body* (Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri*), *Reflection and Remembrance* (Requiems by Fauré and Charpentier), as well as Handel's *Serse* at Opera Holland Park.

With a regular series of concerts at Stone Nest in Soho (the former Welsh Chapel and Limelight nightclub) including a new production of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* and revival of their programme *Mourn*, Figure will now commence a residency at LSO St Luke's combining Bach Cantatas with new commissions by Oliver Leith, Freya Waley-Cohen, Jonathan Dove and others. They will release their debut album of *Rhythm of the Seasons* in the spring.

www.figureensemble.co.uk

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