



Festival Review

London International Festival of Early Music
LIFEM: Digital
5 - 11 November 2020

THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL
of
EARLY MUSIC

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INTRODUCTION

“Classical music thrives online with early music festival” **Financial Times**

The unprecedented situation and restrictions caused by the global pandemic created a climate of uncertainty for everyone involved in the events industry, particularly within the arts and culture sector. With musical and concert landscapes reshaping, we seized the opportunity to host our 2020 festival digitally and to share our events with a diverse international audience. We developed a comprehensive festival website, expanded our social media following and hosted a full programme of events, including concerts and an innovative virtual exhibition.

The exceptional circumstances facing music and music makers have brought out the best in everyone and we're extremely grateful to them all for rising to the challenge. The LIFEM team, concert artists, loyal supporters, friends in the media and our worldwide audiences ensured the overwhelming success of LIFEM: Digital 2020. Thanks to this support we have emerged with an enhanced global visibility and credibility that truly bodes well for the future.

Our team has continued to expand. We appointed experienced contemporary music publisher and promoter, Gill Graham, as our inaugural artistic director. The calibre of this year's performers and Young Ensemble judges is a testament to Gill's stature and reputation in the industry and we look forward to Gill programming a full festival in 2021. In another first, we achieved a media partnership with a leading arts and culture streaming platform, Marquee TV. This partnership made it possible for us to reach a global audience and offer our digital concerts and festival programme on Marquee's platform and on our website, free of charge (although donations are always welcome).

Planning for LIFEM 2021 has already begun. The 2020 experience will be a hard act to follow and the credit for that lies with each of LIFEM's team, the wonderful musicians and exhibitors involved and all of our generous supporters.

Thank you to everyone involved and congratulations to all of our performers for their virtuoso displays of musicianship. We look forward to building on this year's great success and welcoming you all back to LIFEM in 2021.

Chris Butler, *festival director*





LIFEM registered as a CIO on 28th July 2020
Charity no: 1190603

Our mission statement:

“To promote the arts for public benefit in particular music and to advance public education and appreciation of music in London by providing an annual music festival in Blackheath, London and/or other music events and/or educational outreach programmes.”

BACKGROUND

“There’s so much to love about the annual London International Festival of Early Music – amazing musicians, an astonishing array of rare instruments and the craftspeople who still make them, the chance to hear often unfamiliar compositions dating back centuries and the sheer joy to be found in sharing an artform that has mesmerised our species since the dawn of humankind.” **The Greenwich Visitor**



The London International Festival of Early Music is one of the largest and most inclusive early music festivals in the world. The festival started life in 1973 at the Royal College of Music and is now based at Blackheath, in London’s oldest surviving purpose-built cultural venue. Our annual festival brings together an exhibition of early music, live concerts from leading artists, performers’ platforms and annual competitions for recorder players and young ensembles, which attracts a network of vibrant artists, early music enthusiasts and supporters.

We are proud to be one of a number of festivals to have taken an innovative approach to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. This year we were pleased to welcome world-renowned concert artists and a global audience to our first digital festival – LIFEM: Digital.



AIMS and OBJECTIVES

"I especially love the fact that despite the festival's title you can also hear music written by contemporary composers for ancient instruments. And this year's highlight in that category has to be the world premiere by viol ensemble Fretwork of a piece by Led Zeppelin legend and genre-hopping musical powerhouse John Paul Jones." **The Greenwich Visitor**

- 1. To deliver an inclusive festival programme which incorporates a range of early music events and concerts.**
- 2. To provide a platform for world-class early music performers and emerging young performers to showcase their performances to a global audience.**
- 3. To attract an international audience from diverse backgrounds to participate in the festival events.**
- 4. To support promising young early music performers and ensembles from across the world and to offer them financial support and experienced mentors.**
- 5. To promote early music instrument makers and provide opportunities for them to exhibit their products and share their expertise with festival attendees.**
- 6. To form new partnerships with local and international organisations, individuals and sponsors to widely promote LIFEM.**
- 7. To build relations with relevant publication journalists to increase LIFEM's press coverage to promote the festival to wider audiences and affirm its position within the wider early music community.**
- 8. To build a sustainable programme of education and outreach work to support LIFEM and its community.**
- 9. To utilise social media platforms to direct people to the festival and to grow LIFEM's social media network and public engagement to build awareness of LIFEM.**



THE CHALLENGE

“John Paul Jones opens LIFEM with idiosyncratic and effective new work”

The Guardian (4 star review)

We made the decision in March to host this year’s festival virtually and immediately began preparations for our first digital venture, LIFEM: Digital. We decided to run the festival for longer than our usual event and hosted a seven-day celebration of early music, with both scheduled events and 24/7 access to festival content.

We formed a media partnership with Marquee TV, which agreed to stream LIFEM’s concerts from its arts and culture streaming platform, as part of its Autumn programme of free content. The enhanced publicity and wider audience created an incentive for us to also offer the concerts for free on our own platform.

We created ‘virtual versions’ of every event in our initial festival programme – a great technical and logistical challenge for the team. We were fortunate to successfully film our four concerts at St Michael & All Angels Church in Blackheath, London, just a week before the second UK lockdown was announced. With the financial support of our sponsors, we were able to produce high-quality audio-visual recordings of our concerts, carried out by a well-established and professional film and sound crew.



THE PROGRAMME

“... this year’s London International Festival of Early Music was about as good as it can get in cyberspace with a series of fabulous recitals, a world premiere by a rock god and exhibitions of some of the most beguiling instruments mankind has ever created.”

The Greenwich Visitor

Fretwork, Thursday 5th November

The festival launched with a concert from internationally-renowned viol consort, *Fretwork* who performed the world premiere of **John Paul Jones’s** *The Tudor Pull*, as part of their concert programme.



Tabea Debus, Friday 6th November

Winner of The Society of Recorder Players/ Moeck International Solo Recorder Competition 2019, *Tabea Debus*, performed a varied programme with accordion player, *Samuele Telari*.



Mahan Esfahani, Saturday 7th November

Internationally-renowned harpsichordist, Mahan Esfahani was the first and only harpsichordist to be a BBC New Generation Artist (2008-2010). His creative programming and work in commissioning new works have drawn the attention of critics and audiences across Europe, Asia, and North America.





Young Ensemble Competition, Sunday 8th November

This concert featured recitals from our three competition finalists: ***Ensemble Pro Victoria***, ***Ensemble Hesper*** and a live-stream performance from Salzburg, from ***MokkaBarock***. This year we welcomed prestigious judges **Lucy Crowe**, **Margaret Faultless** & our inaugural festival director, **Gill Graham**, who crowned ***Ensemble Pro Victoria*** and ***Ensemble Hesper*** joint winners.



Performers' Platforms

The performers' platforms provide groups of young players the opportunity to showcase their talents to the early music community. This year, we were delighted to welcome young performers and ensembles from prestigious institutions from across the globe whose 30-minute programmes of early music were scheduled for each day of the festival.

Programme: **The Juilliard School, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Royal College of Music, The University of Arts of Cuba, Trinity College, Cambridge and Royal Conservatoire The Hague, The Shanghai Camerata, Das Neue Mannheimer Orchester.**



Virtual Exhibition

We hosted a virtual exhibition to provide an opportunity for customers to explore an extensive array of instruments and accessories and the facility to purchase products directly on the LIFEM: Digital marketplace. We welcomed 36 specialist early music makers, including 12 featured exhibitors who were offered tailor-made webpages on the LIFEM website.

Featured exhibitors: **The Early Music Shop, Eitan Hoffer, Richard Jones, Marcos Kaiser, Guido M. Klemisch, Kunath, Terry Mann, Erik Martens, Stephen Robinson, Von Huene, Jeremy West.**

OUTCOMES

“Jones doesn’t try to recreate a Tudor sound-world, but he writes idiosyncratically and unselfconsciously for viols, and the piece works: it’s just new enough.” The Guardian

This year we have been required to adapt and innovate to continue our charitable work and more importantly than ever, help to ensure the early music community continues to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

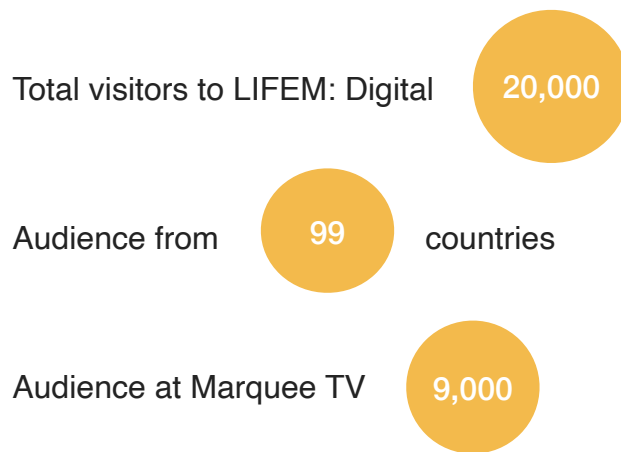
- 1. Over the seven days of the festival, we hosted 13 different events. The Young Ensemble Competition with performances from our three finalists, eight Performers’ Platform recitals, our Virtual Exhibition and three world-class early music concerts.**
- 2. We created a digital platform to host our festival events which could be accessed from anywhere in the world. We developed digital versions of all the events in our festival programme to maintain our status as an inclusive and wide-ranging festival of early music within LIFEM: Digital.**
- 3. The digital platform enabled us to welcome an international audience from all continents. Festival attendees from an astonishing 99 countries accessed the festival events and concerts, of which the top three countries were: UK, US and Japan.**
- 4. We supported 132 exceptionally-skilled young performers from seven different countries: Canada, China, Cuba, Germany, Netherlands, UK and the US, through our Young Ensemble Competition and Performers’ Platforms. We maintained our pledge to provide financial support to the finalists in the Young Ensemble Competition, offering them £3,500 in prize money and high-quality audiovisual recordings and photographs of their performances. The experienced judges will offer mentoring support to the winning ensembles throughout the next year to organise their return concerts at our 2021 festival in Blackheath, London.**
- 5. The virtual exhibition hosted 36 early music instrument makers and offered individually-crafted webpages for 12 featured exhibitors to promote their businesses. The digital marketplace provided the opportunity for exhibitors to share their expertise and products with our festival audience.**

6. We entered into an exciting media partnership with Marquee TV which hosted the festival concerts on its arts and culture streaming platform. We built relationships with fellow early music festivals and organisations within the arts who promoted the festival to their audiences to provide targeted public support to LIFEM. This year, we also gained generous sponsors whose commercial support enabled us to host our festival digitally and continue the quality of our events through high-quality recordings.
7. We gained many new friends in the media and built personal relationships with individuals from prestigious press institutions whose media coverage promoted LIFEM to a diverse audience outside of the Early Music community. LIFEM's events were promoted to more than eight million people on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme and secured four-star reviews in both *The Financial Times* and *The Guardian*, among many others.
8. We developed our social media networks this year and gained a significant number of new followers across all of our social media channels. We posted almost 100 times on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram during October and November to promote the festival events which saw a high public engagement rate, both from our followers and from a wider network.



IN NUMBERS

Audience:



Programme:



Media:

Press releases disseminated by LIFEM

8

Press & print articles

10

5

Radio interviews

Social Media: *(from 1st October to 30th November)*

55,800

Impressions on Twitter

42,000

Total reach on Facebook

63%

Increase in number of followers on Twitter

16.4%

Increase in number of followers on Facebook





AUDIENCE TESTIMONIALS

"Thank you! Wonderful Fretwork concert! Great festival. I hope you reached a lot of new people and are thriving despite the strange circumstances.... Stay safe."

"Thanks for the marvellous Fretwork concert."

"Thank you for a riveting (Fretwork) concert!"

"Would pay to see that again!"

"Thank you for the fabulous recital from Mahan Esfahani!"

"Thank you for all your hard work in making sure LIFEM 2020 was such a wonderful success. I have thoroughly enjoyed all the concerts, talks, etc. Much appreciated."

"Well done to all the performers and organisers. A lovely concert."

"Our daughter has just performed in the RCMJD concert which we greatly enjoyed. Many thanks for including it in your online event. We look forward to watching other concerts now too."

"Thank you for doing this! Much appreciated."

"Not the 'late' early music festival! Show must and does go on!"

"Deep gratitude for your amazing dedication to music. Hearing early music touches me deeply."

"Fantastic! Congratulations to the winners and to all who participated. Music keeps us going and makes all life troubles easier to cope with. Thank you, beautiful and talented young people!"



PRESS TESTIMONIALS

“Fretwork review – John Paul Jones opens LIFEM with idiosyncratic and effective new work.” **The Guardian (4-star review)**

“There’s so much to love about the annual London International Festival of Early Music – amazing musicians, an astonishing array of rare instruments and the craftspeople who still make them, the chance to hear often unfamiliar compositions dating back centuries and the sheer joy to be found in sharing an artform that has mesmerised our species since the dawn of humankind.” **The Greenwich Visitor**

“[Fretwork] Their exquisite sense of consort and perfect intonation made for an extremely attractive concert.” **Early Music Reviews**

“The music is richly woven between the players, the opening statement from the bass viols kicking off a dialogue in which we hear hints of the Morris-style tune that will dominate the finale. The middle movement is evocative simultaneously of the easily flowing river and the colossal effort of rowing on it, the upper viols moving in parallel over a heavy plucked bass line, with angular solos that sound deliberately awkward.” **The Guardian**

“Jones doesn’t try to recreate a Tudor sound-world, but he writes idiosyncratically and unselfconsciously for viols, and the piece works: it’s just new enough.” **The Guardian**

“Jones...wrote the work during lockdown and its freshness was almost palpable, paying tribute to the glories of the Tudor musical tradition while remaining resolutely 21st century. To my ear, it’s a masterpiece.” **The Greenwich Visitor**

“[Mahan’s concert] It was a fascinating journey, taking us from the dying days of the Elizabethan age to the origins of baroque through the likes of Orlando Gibbons, John Bull, Giles Farnaby, Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck.” **The Greenwich Visitor**

“The Tudor works, by Tye, Holborne, Bull and Lupo, unfolded entirely beautifully, the highlight being John Bull’s In Nomine in 11/4, its harmonies grinding together with glorious friction.” **The Guardian**

“Classical music thrives online with early music festival.” **Financial Times (4-star review)**

“The highlight was the premiere of a new piece by John Paul Jones, best known as the former bassist and keyboardist with Led Zeppelin. Called The Tudor Pull, it imagines the visual spectacle of the royal barge as it journeys up the Thames from Hampton Court to the Tower of London in music that combines the rhythmic energy of progressive rock with the patience to create a burgeoning power. Judged in classical terms, it is succinct and well organised, a clear success.” **Financial Times**

“Fretwork offered expressive playing in pieces by the late 16th-century English composers Anthony Holborne, John Bull and Christopher Tye, and made a good case for playing Arvo Pärt’s much-performed Fratres on viols, their plangent sound adding to its hypnotic, uneasy feel.” **Financial Times**

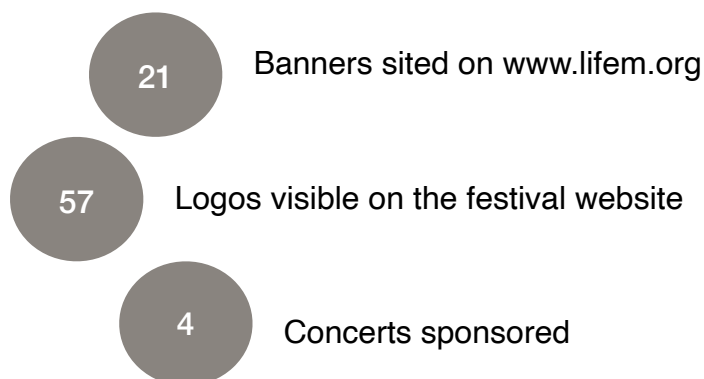
“...while no one would suggest a digital concert can ever be as rewarding as a live performance, this year’s London International Festival of Early Music was about as good as it can get in cyberspace with a series of fabulous recitals, a world premiere by a rock god and exhibitions of some of the most beguiling instruments mankind has ever created.” **The Greenwich Visitor**

“[Tabea Debus’ concert] It was a bravura display of musicianship and theatricality.” **The Greenwich Visitor.**



SPONSORS and BRANDING

Thank you to all of our sponsors.



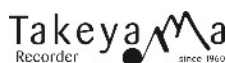
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- Julie Elhard
- Caroline Jones
- Mary Tyers

KEY PEOPLE and THANKS

FESTIVAL DIRECTOR

Chris Butler

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Gill Graham

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Ann Barkway

ASSISTANT PRODUCER

Alfie Buckley

SOUND ENGINEER

Jonas Persson

FILMING

Made by Berlin

With thanks to...

St Michael & All Angels Church and Marion Lane

Charley Jackson

Simon Neal

Andrew Wooderson

Alistair McLeish

Anna McCarthy





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