

## **Beethoven Unwrapped**

It all started when veteran French pianist Jean-Bernard Pommier said he would like to play all the sonatas in the new hall in Kings Place. If you have to pick one musical figure to focus on over many months, Beethoven seemed to me to be the one: here is a composer who represents the culmination of one great tradition and the revolutionary beginning of another, which is still being played out today.

Around this string of fascinating sonatas, we've wrapped all the other chamber music, from the earliest piano sonatas to the latest string quartets, plus one concert of orchestral works. I think Hall One at Kings Place will be a perfect venue: it's intimate, the acoustics and the environment are entirely sympathetic to this repertoire.

I'm delighted to welcome the Orion Quartet from New York to play the string quartets, Christoph Richter the cello sonatas, and that we have an artist of the stature of oboist Maurice Bourgue leading the wind pieces. He is one of a group of soloists coming to Kings Place who bring unique depth and experience to this repertoire: mezzo soprano Ann Murray, joined by Iain Burnside, Peter Cropper, who performs the violin sonatas and trios with Martin Roscoe and Moray Welsh, the Avison Ensemble bringing a programme of early orchestral music and Jean-Bernard Pommier himself.

We hear a very small proportion of Beethoven's music regularly, and few there are who have an intimate knowledge of all the chamber music. In focusing on a single composer's output in this way, I'm hoping that the really subtle changes in his evolution as a composer will be revealed.

Beethoven's music has the spiritual depth to transport us, and the intellectual rigour to challenge us still, so I'm particularly pleased that Professor Barry Cooper is leading such a high-level study programme with a host of experts. I hope these days will excite students and stimulate music-lovers alike. The study days also allow us to explore the orchestral, choral and operatic music, as do the Beethoven films from the Louvre Film Festival. These will add a whole new dimension, and an entirely international perspective, featuring legendary conductors and priceless interviews.

This series forms the backbone of our opening season at Kings Place. Whether you choose a particular strand to follow through or whether you dip into all of them, happy unwrapping!

**Peter Millican**

