

JERSEY INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL FOR AMATEUR PIANISTS CONTINUES CORTOT'S LEGACY

THE JERSEY INTERNATIONAL Festival for Amateur Pianists is a unique event that showcases the talents of serious amateur pianists and the potential to raise the level of their playing through high-calibre individual coaching and masterclasses.

The annual festival began in 1999 as Normandy Piano Week, established to celebrate the profound and influential teaching philosophy of the great Swiss pianist Alfred Cortot (1877-1962). In 2013, the event moved to Jersey, the largest of the Channel Islands, establishing itself as the Jersey International Festival for Amateur Pianists (JIFFAP), following the same pattern as its Normandy predecessor.

This year's JIFFAP runs from 29 May to 5 June, taking place at the imposing Chateau Vermont, home of the Jersey Academy of Music, located in a peaceful country setting outside Jersey's capital, St Helier. The course is limited to nine full participants, each with access to excellent one-to-one tuition and unlimited use of a piano throughout the day. Group classes are held each evening in the Concert Hall of the Jersey Academy of Music, and there are many opportunities for participants to perform throughout the week, in an informal atmosphere.

This year's Festival includes a visit from the French pianist Éric Heidsieck, who studied with Cortot as a boy and represents a direct link with his legacy. Heidsieck was professor of piano at the prestigious Conservatoire National Supérieur de Lyon and since 2004 has taught at the Schola Cantorum. A winner of a 'Grand Prix du Disque' for his recording of Mozart's Concertos, he has performed the complete cycle of Beethoven's Piano Sonatas from memory three times as well as recording these works for EMI in the 1970s. He will be giving a special class on Beethoven preceded by a short recital on 2 June.

This year's individual tuition and masterclasses will be led by Frédéric Aguessy, winner of the 1979 Concours Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaut and currently professor of piano at the Conservatoire de Rouen in Normandy. Aguessy was a pupil of Yvonne Lefébure, herself a pupil of Cortot and described herself as being 'handed the torch' by the great master, completely transforming her approach to her own teaching. In addition to his teaching, Aguessy will be giving a public recital at the Jersey Arts Centre on 31 May.

Also on the teaching faculty at JIFFAP is Festival director Michael Stembridge-Montavont, a writer and performer who

has carried out extensive research into the playing and performance philosophy of Alfred Cortot. He is joined by Jillian Skerry and Caroline Sablayrolles.

As an option, the course includes an introduction to Alfred Cortot's exercises on piano technique and his approach to solving specific technical problems. The first Jersey event in 2013 was launched by the Turkish-born piano luminary Idil Biret, a pupil of Alfred Cortot, who continues the traditions of his teaching. When she visited the Festival again last year, she remarked how little dynamic variation the pianists of today have and how the older generation brought so many more nuances dynamic shades to their playing: 'They could play in a "half light", she observed – or as Cortot described, *'une douceur pénétrante'*. The emphasis on Alfred Cortot's legacy at JIFFAP is primarily oriented towards improving the freedom of participants' playing and exploring the untapped possibilities of tone and dynamics when they perform.

As in previous years, BBC Radio Jersey is planning to record for broadcast the JIFFAP closing concert at the Jersey Academy of Music on Saturday 4 June.

www.normandypianocourses.com

LEFT-HANDED PIANIST NICHOLAS MCCARTHY GIVES FIRST UK TOUR

THE LEFT-HANDED PIANIST Nicholas McCarthy will undertake his first UK tour in June to promote his debut album *Solo*.



Born without his right hand, McCarthy was told aged 14 that he would never achieve his dream of becoming a concert pianist. In 2012, aged 22, he graduated from the Royal College of Music, making international headlines as the first one-handed pianist to do so in the institution's 130-year history.

In the same year Nicholas played to a worldwide audience of half a billion at the Paralympic Games closing ceremony in London alongside rock band Coldplay.

Following his triumph at Rhinegold LIVE, where he was talent-spotted by Warner Classics, McCarthy signed an exclusive recording contract with the label in 2015. His Warner album *Solo*, which features 17 pieces of left-hand repertoire

spanning three centuries, has gone on to secure a top 10 classical chart position and multiple five-star reviews. McCarthy is also a Yamaha artist and recorded *Solo* on a Yamaha CFX grand piano.

McCarthy's tour, running from 29 May to 9 June, is a celebration of determination and three centuries of music played with the left hand alone. His programme features works by Liszt, Chopin/ Godowsky, Bach, Scriabin, Gershwin, Blumenfeld and many others, including a new commission by Nigel Hess.

McCarthy will round out the tour with a special recital appearance at MGSO4 (Epsom & Ewell Arts Festival) on 26 June.

www.nicholasmccarthy.co.uk