

Press Release



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For Immediate Release

Exciting new cello talent Michael Petrov joins roll call of names to receive major award

- The most recent recipient of the Musicians Benevolent Fund Suggia Gift is outstanding new cello talent, Michael Petrov.
- The award is highly prestigious and Michael joins a list of major talents in receiving the award including Jacqueline Du Pré, Steven Isserlis, Robert Cohen, Raphael Wallfisch, Julian Lloyd Webber and Guy Johnston.
- As a direct result of the Suggia Gift auditions, Michael has been invited to perform Prokofiev's Sinfonia Concertante with Oxford Symphony Orchestra at Oxford Town Hall on Saturday 6 February at 7.30pm. After his performance he will receive his award from the Chief Executive of the Musicians Benevolent Fund, David Sulkin.

At the end of last year the Suggia Gift, which is one of the many awards in the gift of the Musicians Benevolent Fund, was made to outstanding young musician, Michael Petrov (19). Michael was born in Bulgaria and began to play the cello at the age of six, inspired by his parents who were both musicians. He was recently awarded a scholarship to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he now studies with Louise Hopkins.

Michael says: "The Suggia gift is extremely important for me. It is hugely prestigious and I am proud and honoured to be its recipient. It also gives me a great boost in self-belief and gives me hope that I might one day make it in this hard and unforgiving occupation. The award is also a tremendous financial help as living in England is very expensive for someone coming from my part of the world."

The Guilhermina Suggia Gift, named after the famous Portuguese cellist, is a highly prestigious award for outstanding young cellists. Michael joins a list of major talents who have previously received the Suggia Gift including Jacqueline Du Pré, Steven Isserlis, Robert Cohen, Raphael Wallfisch, Julian Lloyd Webber and Guy Johnston.

Guy Johnston joined Robert Max, also a previous recipient, and Susan Monks, Principal Cello of BBC Symphony Orchestra, on the panel and says: "I am grateful to the Musicians Benevolent Fund Awards for supporting my early years of development and was honoured to be on the panel at this year's Suggia Gift. It reminded me of the necessity of these awards to support such gifted musicians like Michael Petrov. The standard really was exceptional and it was a huge privilege to listen to the talent that is emerging from our countries' finest institutions."

As a result of the auditions, Robert Max has invited Michael to perform Prokofiev's Sinfonia Concertante with Oxford Symphony Orchestra at Oxford Town Hall on Saturday 6 February at 7.30pm. After his performance he will receive his award from Chief Executive of the Musicians Benevolent Fund, David Sulkin. Michael replaces the previously advertised Natalie Clein who is now unable to perform with the orchestra.

Guilhermina Suggia was a champion of young artists throughout her career and the Musicians Benevolent Fund continues to help outstanding young musicians through the Suggia Gift and many other awards. For more information and details of the Oxford Symphony Orchestra concert, please visit: www.mbf.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

Michael Petrov was born in Bulgaria and began to play the cello at the age of six. When he was seven he played Vivaldi's Cello Concerto in A minor with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. He has won a number of competitions in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic and played in masterclasses with many great musicians such as Mstislav Rostropovich, Bernard Greenhouse, Young Chang Cho, Robert Cohen, Stefan Popov and Xenia Jankovic. In 2002 he was awarded a cello from the Rostropovich Foundation and in September 2005 he took a full scholarship to attend the Yehudi Menuhin School, where he studied with Thomas Carroll. He currently studies at the Guildhall School of Music.

The Guilhermina Suggia Gift is named after Guilhermina Suggia, a Portuguese cellist and one of the most outstanding of her generation. She was born in Portugal in 1889 and from 1907 to 1913 lived and worked in Paris with Spanish cellist Pablo Casals. Perhaps the most famous depiction of Guilhermina Suggia is the oil painting, entitled Madame Suggia, by Augustus John, which is now part of the Tate Collection. She died in 1950 but throughout her life she enjoyed a spectacular career - touring extensively in Europe. Her last British performance was in 1949 at the Edinburgh Festival.

Guilhermina Suggia was a champion of young artists throughout her career and her wishes were to advance the musical education of the young, especially in relation to the cello, with the aim of creating outstanding solo performers.

The Musicians Benevolent Fund is a unique charity which provides essential help to musicians of all ages. The Fund supports music professionals throughout their working lives when a crisis such as an accident or illness can have a devastating impact and in later life, with the challenges that face older people. The Fund also recognises that the life of a professional musician has to begin early and support talented young people to enable them to fully develop their creativity and musical potential.

Please note that the Musicians Benevolent Fund is no longer using the acronym 'MBF' and should be referred to as 'the Musicians Benevolent Fund' or 'the Fund' thereafter.

For further press information and high resolution images please contact:

Christine Brown

Media and Communications Officer

Musicians Benevolent Fund

7-11 Britannia Street

London WC1X 9JS

T: 020 7239 9116

F: 020 7637 4307

E: cbrown@mbf.org.uk
