

# OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL JUNE 10-13, 2010

THOMAS W. MORRIS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

GEORGE BENJAMIN, MUSIC DIRECTOR

## GEORGE BENJAMIN – 2010 MUSIC DIRECTOR

Born in 1960, George Benjamin started to play the piano at the age of seven, and began composing almost immediately. In 1976 he entered the Paris Conservatoire to study composition with Olivier Messiaen and piano with Yvonne Loriod, after which he worked with Alexander Goehr at King's College Cambridge.

His first orchestral work, *Ringed by the Flat Horizon*, was performed at the BBC Proms when he was only 20; since then his works have continued to be played across the world. In recent years there have been major retrospectives of his work in London, Tokyo, Brussels, Berlin, Strasbourg and Madrid. The centre-point of a portrait at the 2006 Festival d'Automne in Paris was his first operatic work, *Into the Little Hill*, a collaboration with playwright Martin Crimp which has toured widely on both sides of the Atlantic since its premiere and won the Royal Philharmonic Society's 2008 award for large-scale composition. It received its London premiere in a new production - a collaboration between the Opera Group and the London Sinfonietta - at the Royal Opera House in February 2009. His most recent work, *Duet* for piano and orchestra, was the Roche commission for the 2008 Lucerne Festival, where he was composer in residence, and was premiered there by Pierre-Laurent Aimard and the Cleveland Orchestra under Franz Welser-Moest.

He appears regularly as a conductor with the world's leading ensembles and orchestras, and recent seasons have included engagements with the London Sinfonietta, Ensemble Modern, BBCSO, Philharmonia and the Berlin Philharmonic and Royal Concertgebouw orchestras. In 1999 he made his operatic debut conducting *Pelléas et Mélisande* in Brussels and he has conducted numerous world premieres, including works by Rihm, Chin, Grisey and Ligeti. In January 2010 there will be extensive celebrations of Benjamin's music in San Francisco and London, marking his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, and in June he will be the music director of the Ojai Festival in California.

George Benjamin was the founding curator of the South Bank's *Meltdown* Festival, and was artistic consultant to the BBC's retrospective of 20th century music, *Sounding the Century*. Since 2001 he has been the Henry Purcell Professor of Composition at King's College, London. He is a Chevalier dans l'ordre des Arts et Lettres, a member of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts, and has been awarded honorary fellowships by the Guildhall School, the Royal Academy and the Royal College of Music.

July 2009

*George Benjamin's music is published by Faber Music, and his works are recorded on Nimbus Records.*