

JULIAN BREAM: A CELEBRATION

FRIDAY 19 SEPTEMBER, 6.00PM
DAVID JOSEFOWITZ RECITAL HALL



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Julian Bream: A Celebration

Julian Bream transformed the landscape of classical guitar and lute in the 20th century.

John Mills and Stephen Goss join Michael Lewin to discuss Julian Bream's extraordinary legacy, his unique association with the Academy, the composers featured in tonight's concert and the ongoing work of the Julian Bream Trust, which he founded.

JULIAN BREAM CBE (1933-2020)

Following an official debut in Cheltenham in 1947, at the age of 13, Julian was soon acknowledged as one of the most remarkable artists of the post-war era. By his 16th birthday, he had taken part in dozens of BBC broadcasts, recitals, and film sessions, and, fascinated by the lute and its culture, had begun researching the Elizabethan repertoire.

In November 1951, he made a triumphant debut at the Wigmore Hall, London and, some months later, his first appearance at the Aldeburgh Festival. After studies at the Royal College of Music, and National Service with the Army, Julian's career pursued its meteoric path. Before long he fulfilled regular engagements on all five continents, including annual tours of the USA and Europe, as well as a busy winter schedule throughout the British Isles.

His solo guitar recitals presented an immense variety of compositions including transcriptions from the 17th century onwards. At the other end of the historical spectrum, Julian was paramount in inspiring profound developments in the contemporary guitar repertoire. Among the composers who dedicated pieces to him were Arnold, Bennett, Berkeley (father and son), Britten, Brouwer, Eastwood, Fricker, Henze, Maxwell Davies, Rawsthorne, Searle, Swayne, Takemitsu, Tippett and Walton. Julian also set new standards in the editing and publication of

these and many other works, from the baroque period onwards, in his quest to broaden musical horizons. His original scores are housed in the Jerwood Library at Trinity Laban Conservatoire.

As well as his enthusiasm for modern guitar sonorities, Julian was renowned for his fervent advocacy of the Renaissance lute. To meet his professional and aesthetic needs, he encouraged particular luthiers to make instruments for him.

In the world's concert halls his solo lute recitals, song accompaniments for Peter Pears and Robert Tear, lute/harpsichord concerts with George Malcolm, programmes of poetry and music with Peggy Ashcroft, and his founding of the Julian Bream Consort, offered unprecedented opportunities for audiences to experience early music.

With this uniquely diverse range of activities, and a multitude of broadcasts and television appearances, he was acknowledged from the mid-1950s onwards as one of the great recording artists of the 20th century. From 1958 Julian recorded for RCA, winning many international awards, including six from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences in the USA, two Edison awards and various prizes from Gramophone magazine. In 1979 RCA presented him with a platinum disc to mark record sales of 500,000 in the UK

alone, as well as gold and silver discs for duo recordings with John Williams. In 1993, to celebrate his 60th birthday, RCA issued *The Ultimate Guitar Collection*, a unique box set of 28 compact discs, revealing the vast gamut of his recording work. From the beginning of the 1990s, Julian continued his recording career with EMI Classics, featuring music by J S Bach, a Concerto album (with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Sir Simon Rattle), and discs devoted to contemporary works and guitar sonatas.

Radio and television appearances brought Julian to the public's notice. A highly successful biographical film 'A Life in the Country' was first shown on BBC TV in 1976. Other important programmes included a series of master classes also for BBC TV and in 1984 he made eight films on location in Spain for Channel 4 exploring historical perspectives of Spanish guitar music.

Further highlights of Julian's career were the 1991 BBC Prom performance of Malcolm Arnold's Guitar Concerto, broadcast on BBC Radio and TV, a recital and concerto performances of works by Takemitsu at the Japan Festival in London (autumn 1991) with the London Symphony Orchestra. During the 1992/3 season he performed on two separate occasions at the Wigmore Hall – at their Gala Re-opening Festival, and at a special concert celebrating his 60th birthday. That year he toured the Far East, visiting Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Japan, and performed the premiere of Leo Brouwer's arrangement for guitar and orchestra of Albéniz's *Iberia* at the Proms. In 1994 he made debuts in both Turkey and Israel to great acclaim, and the following year played for the soundtrack to the Hollywood film *Don Juan de Marcos*.

Julian was awarded an OBE (1964) for services to music and the CBE (1985). He

received Honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Surrey (1968), and Leeds (1984). In 1976 he was personally presented with the Villa-Lobos Gold Medal by the composer's widow. He was elected an Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music (1966) and has been honoured with Fellowships of the Royal College of Music (1981) and the Royal Northern College of Music (1983). In 1988 he became an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society and was also presented with the Royal Philharmonic Society Instrumentalist's Award in 1996.

In 1997, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of his debut, he performed a recital at Cheltenham Town Hall. A few weeks later the BBC dedicated a special television tribute 'This Is Your Life' programme to Julian, filmed after a commemorative concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London.

Towards the end of his career notable engagements included a solo performance at the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool; a Kosovo Aid concert at St John's, Smith Square with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields; recitals at the Snape Proms, Aldeburgh; recitals at the Norfolk and Norwich Festival; and a tour of UK National Trust properties. In November 2001 he gave an anniversary recital at Wigmore Hall, celebrating 50 years since his 1951 debut there; and in 2008, accompanied by a Royal Academy of Music Chamber Ensemble, made a special guest appearance at the Malcolm Arnold Festival in the composer's hometown of Northampton. Julian's association with the Academy dated back to his friendship with Hector Quine, who founded the RAM's Guitar Department in 1959, and for almost half a century he adjudicated his eponymous Guitar Prize. At occasional points in his busy schedule Julian had made time to give young players the benefit of his advice; however,

at the invitation of Michael Lewin, Hector Quine's successor, he agreed to give regular masterclasses to RAM guitar students over a period lasting from December 1989 to May 1996.

In 2009 Julian established his own charitable trust (www.julianbreamtrust.org) to commission major new works from leading composers and to provide scholarships for exceptionally gifted young guitarists and lutenists at the Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Following its inaugural concert at Wigmore Hall in 2011, the Julian Bream Trust has sponsored four more London recitals by its scholars, in programmes specifically designed by Julian to showcase world premieres of compositions by Julian Anderson, Harrison Birtwistle, Leo Brouwer, Edward Cowie and Ollie Mustonen. The next Wigmore Hall recital is planned for November 2021.*

Julian's own emergence as an artist of world-class stature is chronicled in the books: 'Julian Bream – the foundations of a career' (Scolar Press), 'A Life on the Road' (MacDonald) and 'The Art of Julian Bream' (Ashley Mark). The DVD 'Julian Bream: My Life in Music' won the DVD of the Year Award in 2007 and in 2013 he received the rare accolade of Gramophone Magazine's Lifetime Achievement Award.

For posterity he leaves a musical legacy of immeasurable value.

**Please note that, since this article was written, the Trust has sponsored a further Wigmore Hall concert in 2023 and the next is due to take place there on 21 November this year, featuring the world premiere of Leo Brouwer's Guitar Quintet no.2.*