



## **Train of Thought**

**Alban Gerhardt to travel Germany's railway network with Bach  
in search of new audiences in 2012**

**Cellist returns to Wigmore Hall for recital with Thomas Larcher (27 March), records Britten's  
Cello Symphony  
with BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (8-11 March), and performs Dutilleux's *Tout un monde  
lontain* and Strauss's *Don Quixote* with the Hallé Orchestra (26 April)**

Social responsibility is more than a matter of passing fashion to Alban Gerhardt. The German cellist believes profoundly in the need for classical musicians to connect with audiences beyond the doors of the conventional concert hall, to reach those isolated or alienated from the art form by stubborn obstacles of social background, money, education or opportunity. Gerhardt's distinctive artistry, praised by one recent reviewer for its calm authority and probing insight, bears witness to his status among the finest string players of our age. His tally of forthcoming dates includes solo engagements with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (14 January 2012), the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (8 March), the Orchestra of Opera North (22 March) and the Hallé Orchestra (26/27 April), together with recitals in partnership with the Austrian composer and pianist Thomas Larcher (Wigmore Hall, 27 March; University of Heidelberg, 28 March). He is also set to record Britten's Cello Suites and Cello Sonata with pianist Steven Osborne and the *Cello Symphony* with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Andrew Manze and Pfitzner's Cello Concertos with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin and Stefan Weigle for future release on the Hyperion label.

In addition to concerto, recital and recording commitments, Gerhardt will pursue his audience outreach mission in 2012 with the first in a series of Bach performances at railway stations in his home country. His Bach-Bahn (Bach Train) project, developed in collaboration with Germany's national railway company, Deutsche Bahn, is scheduled to roll out in early May at Berlin's Hauptbahnhof (Central Station). The launch event aims to prepare the ground for an extensive locomotive tour, engineered to deliver the cellist's Bach interpretations to passengers and staff at railway stations on main lines routes to the German capital next autumn. Bach-Bahn evolved naturally out of Gerhardt's 2010 Radio Tour, for which he joined regional radio DJs in Germany to chat, perform and invite listeners to suggest places where he might present impromptu concerts later the same day. The list of venues ranged from small concert halls to a maternity ward and supermarkets. "This is more important to me than teaching young cellists to play the instrument," he comments. "I'd rather spend time going to unusual places and reaching people who are not musicians."

While school performances have been part of Alban Gerhardt's world for almost two decades, he notes that his audience-building activities gained significant momentum in 2010 after he played Bach's Six Cello Suites at RadialSystem, Berlin's alternative creative space for the arts. The venue, based in a converted Wilhelmine-era pumping station by the River Spree, inspired the performer and his audience. "We used some subtle lighting effects and I played from four seats in different parts of the space, including one 40 feet above the audience," he notes. "One woman who had never been to a classical concert wrote to me to say that she was so moved by it that she decided to learn cello. The incredible power and beauty of Bach's music had such a profound effect on her and on so many others. I didn't dare to believe that it could work so well. But because it was so successful, I decided that I had to take classical music to people who have never heard it before."

The performer's desire to communicate with the broadest possible audience is informed by a long personal exploration of social and political ideas. As a child, Gerhardt was raised in what he describes as 'practically a socialist commune'. The apartment block where he lived with his musician parents and four siblings was also home to Ulrike Meinhof, soon to gain notoriety as co-founder of the Red Army Faction, and a member of Willy Brandt's SPD government. "I read like crazy when I was a kid, almost two books a day, and was an independent

thinker from a very early age,” he recalls. “Somehow I felt that I was an outsider – and I was proud of it. I have always been a good boy but not at all obedient! I could not follow rules. And I was also very shy. I opened up through music and dared to speak to people because of it. Classical musicians today have more opportunities than ever to be heard. This is one of the reasons why I write a blog, to tell as many people as possible what I think music is about or should be about. We cannot exist in an ivory tower.”

Great music, suggests Gerhardt, belongs to the many not the few. He speaks passionately about the power of classical performances to bring people together, to offer shared experiences and reflections on the human condition. “I am strongly aware of all the distractions that can keep people inside their homes: ordering food online, watching television, surfing the internet, playing computer games,” he comments. “In the past, kids would play soccer, read a book, learn an instrument or make things, often to avoid being bored. I’m afraid that whole generations are growing up without such experiences in their lives. I want to reach people of all ages and backgrounds, wherever they are, and connect them to the experience of live classical music.”

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**Alban Gerhardt  
Performance Highlights (January – August 2012)**

**UK**

14 January 2012 – Brangwyn Hall, Guildhall, Swansea  
BBC National Orchestra of Wales/ Kristjan Järvi (Lalo: Cello Concerto)

8 March 2012 – City Halls, Glasgow  
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/ Andrew Manze (Britten: Cello Symphony)

22 March 2012 – Huddersfield Town Hall  
Orchestra of Opera North/ Mathias Bamert (Dvořák: Cello Concerto)

27 March 2012 – Wigmore Hall, London  
Recital with Thomas Larcher

26 April 2012 – Bridgewater Hall, Manchester  
Hallé /Markus Stenz (Dutilleux: *Tout un monde lointain*; R. Strauss: *Don Quixote*)

27 April 2012 – Sands Centre, Carlisle  
Hallé / Andrew Gourlay (Dvořák: Cello Concerto)

**Germany**

4 & 5 February 2012 – Hof  
Hofer Symphoniker / Ari Rasilainen (Brahms: Double Concerto, with Hyeyoon Park)

17 February 2012 – Staatstheater Nürnberg  
Nürnberger Philharmoniker / Marcus Bosch (Dvořák: Cello Concerto)

24 & 26 February 2012 – Staatstheater Cottbus

Philharmonisches Orchester / Rasmus Baumann (Britten: Cello Symphony)

28 March 2012 – Heidelberg University  
Recital with Thomas Larcher

8 May – Berlin Hauptbahnhof  
Bach-Bahn project

1-10 June 2012 – Düren, Heimbach Festival  
Recital with Lars Vogt

6 July 2012 – Rheingau Festival  
Recital with Steven Osborne

### **Other European Engagements**

16 January 2012 – Philharmonie, Luxembourg  
Solistes Européens / Christoph König (Honegger: Concerto & Saint-Saëns: Concerto No.1)

19 & 20 January 2012 – Euskalduna Palace, Bilbao  
Bilbao Symphony Orchestra/ Marco Guidarini (Shostakovich: Cello Concerto No.1)

27 & 28 January 2012 – deSingel, Antwerp  
Royal Flemish Philharmonic Orchestra/ Otto Tausk (Britten: Cello Symphony)

6 May 2012 – Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels  
Orchestre National de Belgique/ Walter Weller (Saint- Saëns Nos.1 & 2)

12 & 13 May 2012 – Austria  
Recitals with Thomas Larcher and Paul Meyer