



Feel the Passion

Grammy Award winners Apollo's Fire and Jeannette Sorrell present three enthralling concerts during their first London residency at St-Martin-in-the-Fields (15-17 April 2023)
Programme offers fresh insights into Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, a late-night baroque jam session with *Blues Café 1610*, and *Exile & Resilience*, a heart-melting bill of Ashkenazi Jewish and African diasporic songs and dances
Cleveland-based early music ensemble's eagerly awaited UK tour also includes *Vivaldi's Four Seasons Rediscovered* Sunday matinee at Snape Maltings

'Sorrell and her dazzling period band... are incandescent', *The Times*

Apollo's Fire is set to return to London after an absence of almost eight years this spring for its first ever UK residency at St-Martin-in-the-Fields (Saturday 15 - Monday 17 April 2023). The Grammy Award-winning ensemble, among North America's finest period instrument groups, will also make a whistlestop visit to Snape Maltings for a Sunday matinee performance of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* (16 April). The London residency opens with a compelling exploration of the literary and musical imagery of *The Four Seasons*, performed in company with soloist Francisco Fullana and directed from the harpsichord by Apollo's Fire founder and Artistic Director, Jeannette Sorrell. It continues with *Blues Café 1610*, a late-night date in the crypt of St Martin's, and concludes with *Exile & Resilience*, a rich mix of music from the Jewish and African diasporas.

"We're coming to London to have a party with our audience," comments Jeannette Sorrell. "We'll begin at St Martin's with *The Four Seasons Rediscovered* and move into the Crypt for our *Blues Café 1610*. And we'll continue the theme of discovery and rediscovery with *Exile & Resilience*, our tour of Ashkenazi Jewish and African music. We are particularly excited to bring one of our multicultural programmes to the UK for the first time, fresh from a big US tour including concerts in New York, Chicago and San Francisco. Baroque music has always been about influencing moods and taking listeners on an emotional journey. We aim to do just that in London and at Snape Maltings and hope that people will leave feeling better than when they arrived for the concert."

Apollo's Fire received a coveted Grammy Award in 2019 for *Songs of Orpheus*, an album of arias, songs and instrumental pieces by Monteverdi, Caccini and others recorded with the Lebanese American tenor Karim Sulayman. It has since scored rave reviews for *O Jerusalem!*, a live recording of music from the Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Armenian quarters of Jerusalem, and for its revelatory account of *The Four Seasons*. The ensemble, which recently added a Chicago residency to its existing series in and around its home in Cleveland, Ohio, secured its international reputation with regular European tours and an extensive discography on the Avie label. The signing of a new partnership with Medici.tv promises to broaden the reach of its critically acclaimed work.

Since last visiting London in 2015 to perform at the BBC Proms, Apollo's Fire has expanded its repertoire to embrace European folk and world music traditions. The development mirrors Jeannette Sorrell's original intention to create a group in tune with the highly expressive language of baroque music and more recent personal discoveries about her father's Ashkenazi Jewish heritage. The harpsichordist and conductor underlines the importance to Apollo's Fire of communicating directly with its audience by projecting the powerful emotions of pre-Classical music. "Engaging with and speaking to the audience, which is something we've done for so long, seems to us like a normal way of making music," observes Sorrell. "Most of our concerts contain a storytelling element that's part of connecting with people and stirring emotions. That was what baroque music was always about."

Storytelling is central to *Exile & Resilience*. The latest Apollo's Fire programme, conceived and directed by Jeannette Sorrell, represents a natural progression from *O Jerusalem!*. Jewish, Palestinian and African American guest artists, the UK-based specialists in Yiddish song and klezmer Merlin and Polina Shepherd among them, will join Apollo's Fire on tour. The concert's overarching theme holds profound personal significance for its creator, who only discovered the details of her father's true identity four years ago.

Sorrell and her family had always believed that her father had come to the United States after the Second World War as an orphaned migrant from Switzerland. When she considered applying for a Swiss passport to make travelling around Europe easier, she asked her father for his immigration papers but was told that he had lost them many years before. A search of Ancestry.com delivered instant access to his US naturalisation certificate, which revealed his Hungarian-sounding, possibly Jewish birthname. After a DNA test showed her genetic heritage

to be 50% Ashkenazi Jewish, she proceeded to visit the United States Memorial Holocaust Museum in Washington. There she discovered that her father had been deported at the age of thirteen, together with his parents, to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where Sorrell's grandmother was murdered and her father and grandfather were put to work before being transferred to Buchenwald concentration camp.

Sorrell's paternal family came from Oradea in Northern Transylvania. The city's Jewish population was deported to Auschwitz in 1944. To deal with the psychological trauma as a survivor of the Holocaust, Sorrell's father chose to close that chapter in his life, leave Europe and create a new identity unrelated to his past.

"*Exile & Resilience* is directly inspired by my father's story," notes Jeannette Sorrell. "He's an exile who was imprisoned in secrets he was unable to share with anyone. Since those secrets came out, he has opened up and become much sunnier. I hope this concert, which is unfortunately very timely, will make everyone think about how we interact with migrants and refugees. There are more refugees in the world today than ever before, according to the UN. The point of the concert is to show how music of different cultures, even those that now hold great enmity between them, once influenced each other at a particular moment in time, when people sat down to eat together, to talk together and to make music together. They blossomed because of that mutual influence."

The Four Seasons, as interpreted by Apollo's Fire, tells another compelling human story. The ensemble's recording with Spanish violinist Francisco Fullana, chosen by *The Sunday Times* as one of its '10 Best Classical Albums of 2021', evokes the vibrancy and vitality of Venetian scenes painted by Canaletto and the colour of life depicted by Vivaldi in his quartet of concertos and the sonnets on which they are based. "The way we present the work in concert is very different from how it is usually experienced," comments Jeannette Sorrell. "I explain to people at the beginning that *The Four Seasons* is not just about the weather! Vivaldi was describing the world of the *contadini*, the Italian peasants of the 18th century, who lived and breathed and celebrated with the changing of the seasons."

Sorrell and her companions preface each concerto with a preview of the unfolding seasonal story. "The players demonstrate some of pictorial effects while I'm telling the tale that Vivaldi included in his sonnets. Together these provide listeners with guideposts along the way. After each of our performances across the United States, so many audience members will say that they thought they knew these pieces well but realised they never knew them until now. I hope our *Four Seasons Rediscovered* concerts will give our audiences in London and Snape a new understanding of Vivaldi's concertos."

Blues Café 1610 offers a musical tour of 17th century pubs and taverns, including dances and party pieces by Marco Uccellini and Tarquinio Merula, folk melodies from John Playford's *The English Dancing Master* (1651), and traditional early 17th century, Celtic and Mediterranean fiddle tunes. Apollo's Fire players, including singing troubadour/utenist Brian Kay and hammered dulcimer virtuoso Tina Bergmann, will use early 17th-century ground basses as the platform for colourful improvisations. "The Playford tunes are, I think, very much like what you would have heard in a London pub in the 1660s," observes Jeannette Sorrell. "Any of the *Blues Café* partygoers who want to make the trip to Suffolk, can join us the following day for Vivaldi at Snape Maltings and then return to St Martin's on the Monday to hear the three sides of what Apollo's Fire does."

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Saturday 15 April 2023, 7pm
St-Martin-in-the-Fields, London
[Event link](#)

Jeannette Sorrell artistic director | **Francisco Fullana** violin | **René Schiffer** cello | **Mimé Yamahiro Brinkmann** cello | **Apollo's Fire**

Vivaldi's Four Seasons Rediscovered:

Uccellini (arr. Sorrell) *La Bergamasca*

Vivaldi *The Four Seasons*

Vivaldi Concerto for Two Cellos in G minor, RV 531

Vivaldi (arr. Sorrell) Concerto Grosso, 'La Folia'

Saturday 15 April 2023, 9pm
Crypt of St-Martin-in-the-Fields, London

[Event link](#)

Jeannette Sorrell artistic director | **Apollo's Fire**

Blues Café 1610

Sunday 16 April 2023, 4pm
Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Suffolk

[Event link](#)

Jeannette Sorrell artistic director | **Francisco Fullana** violin | **Apollo's Fire**

Vivaldi's Four Seasons Rediscovered:

Vivaldi Concerto No.1 in E major 'Spring'

Vivaldi Concerto No.2 in G minor 'Summer'

Vivaldi Concerto No.3 in F major 'Autumn'

Vivaldi Concerto No.4 in F minor 'Winter'

Monday 17 April 2023, 7.30pm
St-Martin-in-the-Fields, London

[Event link](#)

Jeannette Sorrell artistic director | **Polina Skovoroda Shepherd** soprano | **Haitham Haidar** tenor | **Jeffrey Strauss** baritone | **Daphna Mor** recorder, ney, vocals | **Merlin Shepherd** clarinet | **Apollo's Singers** | **Apollo's Fire**

Exile & Resilience – Music of the Jewish & African Diasporas

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Programme reviews, videos and photos:

Vivaldi's Four Seasons Rediscovered

www.apollofire.org/touring/touring-programs/vivaldis-four-seasons-rediscovered/

Blues Café 1610

www.apollofire.org/touring/touring-programs/blues-cafe-1610/

Exile & Resilience – Music of the Jewish & African Diasporas

www.apollofire.org/touring/touring-programs/exile-and-resilience/

Photos

www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/k3u86umq9gm0dyo5mvk8w/h?dl=0&rlkey=waqqor8gmoillvzze8v9l5ced

Apollo's Fire

Named for the classical god of music and the sun, Apollo's Fire is a Grammy-winning ensemble. Founded by award-winning harpsichordist and conductor Jeannette Sorrell, the period band is dedicated to the baroque ideal that music should evoke the various *Affekts* or passions in the listeners. The Apollo's Fire musicians are creative artists who share Sorrell's passion for drama and rhetoric.

Apollo's Fire has performed five European tours, with sold-out concerts at the BBC Proms in London, Madrid's Royal Theatre, Bordeaux's Grand Théâtre de l'Opéra, the National Concert Hall of Ireland, and venues in France, Italy, Austria, and Portugal. Chosen by the *Daily Telegraph* as one of London's "Best 5 Classical Concerts of the Year," Apollo's Fire's 2014 London performance was praised for "superlative music-making... combining European stylishness with American entrepreneurialism."

North American tour engagements include Carnegie Hall (twice), the Tanglewood and Ravinia festivals (three times), the Boston Early Music Festival series, the Aspen Music Festival, Library of Congress, the National Gallery of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and major venues in Toronto, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Most of these concerts have been sold out. In 2021, Apollo's Singers made their debut with the New York Philharmonic under the baton of Jeannette Sorrell, winning rave reviews.

At home in Cleveland and Chicago, Apollo's Fire enjoys sold-out performances at its series, which has drawn national attention for creative programming.

With over 12 million views of its YouTube videos, Apollo's Fire has released 30 commercial CDs and won a Grammy Award in 2019 for the album *Songs of Orpheus* with tenor Karim Sulayman. Eleven of the ensemble's CD releases have become best-sellers on the classical Billboard chart, including Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, Monteverdi's *Vespers*, Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*, and Sorrell's crossover programs including *Sacrum Mysterium – A Celtic Christmas Vespers*; *Sugarloaf Mountain – An Appalachian Gathering*; *Sephardic Journey – Wanderings of the Spanish Jews*; and *Christmas on Sugarloaf Mountain*.

Jeannette Sorrell – Artistic Director

Grammy-winning conductor Jeannette Sorrell is recognised internationally as one of today's most compelling interpreters of Baroque and Classical repertoire. She is the subject of the 2019 documentary by Oscar-winning director Allan Miller, titled *Playing With Fire: Jeannette Sorrell and the Mysteries of Conducting*.

Sorrell studied conducting at the Aspen and the Tanglewood music festivals under Leonard Bernstein and Roger Norrington and harpsichord with Gustav Leonhardt in Amsterdam. She won First Prize in the Spivey International Harpsichord Competition, competing against over 70 harpsichordists from four continents.

Sorrell made her New York Philharmonic debut in 2021 and Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2022, both to rave reviews. She has repeatedly conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Utah Symphony, Florida Orchestra, and New World Symphony, and has also led the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic (Bach's *St John Passion*), the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Opera St. Louis with the St. Louis Symphony, Grand Rapids Symphony, and Philharmonia Baroque in San Francisco, among others. Upcoming engagements this spring include a debut with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León (Spain) and a return to Philharmonia Baroque.

As founder and conductor of Apollo's Fire, she has led the renowned ensemble at London's BBC Proms, Carnegie Hall, and many international venues. Sorrell and Apollo's Fire have released 30 commercial CDs, including 11 bestsellers on the Billboard classical chart and a 2019 Grammy winner. Her CD recordings of the Bach *St John Passion* and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* have been chosen as best in the field by the *Sunday Times* (2020 and 2021). Her Monteverdi *Vespers* recording was chosen by *BBC Music Magazine* as one of "30 Must-Have Recordings for Our Lifetime" (September 2022). With over 12 million views of her YouTube videos, Sorrell has attracted national attention and awards for creative programming, using contextual and dramatic elements.