



Sunday 23 July 2023, 7.30pm
St Mary's Church, Petworth

Aaron Akugbo (trumpet) & John Kitchen (organ)

BIOGRAPHY

Aaron Azunda Akugbo (trumpet)

“Trumpeter Aaron Akugbo was a refined soloist in Haydn's Trumpet Concerto in E flat major. His sound was sweet, often lyrical, with the ability to play both legato and to manage the treacherous multi-octave leaps that Haydn sets as challenges to the soloist. The second movement was especially fine, with Akugbo's phrasing of the lyrical solo line. The third movement's acrobatics were played with perfect clarity and intonation”.

The Arts Desk

Born in 1998 and of Nigerian-Scottish descent, Aaron Azunda Akugbo hails from Edinburgh and is poised as a future leading exponent of his instrument. He brings a wide-ranging musical taste to his artistry and despite being classically trained, cites Louis Armstrong as his biggest musical inspiration. He is a charismatic performer with an abundance of natural humour which translates into an effortless engagement with people and audiences.

A graduate of the Royal Academy of Music and an ex-principal of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, Aaron can often be seen freelancing in the principal chairs of some of the most prestigious orchestras in the UK including the Philharmonia, BBC Philharmonic, BBC Symphony and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras.

In 2020, as part of the Southbank Centre's 'Behind Closed Doors' concerts series, Aaron made his London debut at the Royal Festival Hall playing the Haydn Trumpet Concerto with Chineke!, Europe's first Black and Minority Ethnic orchestra. His performance received glowing reviews, with the Arts Desk describing him as “a refined soloist... His sound was sweet, often lyrical... with perfect clarity and intonation”. Within the orchestra, Aaron has played in the UK's top concert halls including Chineke's BBC Proms debut. Aaron made his Wigmore debut playing Saint-Saëns Septet Op. 65 for trumpet, piano and strings with members of Chineke! as well as participating in the orchestra's tour of Europe playing in halls such as the Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam and Kölner Philharmonie.

Recent and forthcoming highlights include recitals at St George's Bristol, the Bath International, Lichfield, Glasgow Cathedral and Lucerne Festivals. The latter of which saw him perform the world premiere of a new piece by Joy Guidry commissioned for him by the I&I Foundation entitled They know what they've done to us. In 2022 he performed as soloist with the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland and will play Haydn's Trumpet Concerto with the Orchestra of the Swan in 2023.

Besides his solo and orchestral performances, Aaron is also a founding member of Connaught Brass. In 2022 the group were finalists at the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) awards in London and were also selected to be Artists of the Tillet Trust, City Music Foundation and Kirkman Concert Society. They were the inaugural winners of the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble

Award in 2019 and attended the prestigious Britten Pears Chamber Music Residency in March 2022.

In early 2019, Aaron was a finalist in the Girolamo Fantini International Trumpet Competition whilst also being awarded the special prize for best performance of “Vulcano Club” by Piergiorgio Ratti. Aaron was subsequently invited by competition panellist and trumpet soloist, Tine Thing Helseth, to the Risør Kammermusikfest in Norway where he received masterclasses from Tine herself whilst also performing as a soloist. Aaron has received both lessons and attended masterclass from many of the top trumpet players including Urban Agnas, Reinhold Friedrich, Jeroen Berwaerts, Gabor Tarkovi, Guillaume Jehl and Eric Aubier. He plays on a combination of Vincent Bach Stradivarius and Scherzer instruments.

John Kitchen (organ)

John Kitchen is an organist, harpsichordist, pianist, continuo player, accompanist, choral director, lecturer, writer, reviewer, adjudicator and recording artist.

Following twelve years as a Lecturer in Music and University Organist in St Andrews, he was appointed Senior Lecturer in Music in the University of Edinburgh. He was a very active member of the Music Department there from 1988 until 2014, when he retired from teaching; however, he retains the post of University Organist.

John is also Director of Music at Old Saint Paul’s Episcopal Church, and Edinburgh City Organist with performing and curatorial duties at the Usher Hall in Edinburgh. He maintains a close association with Edinburgh University’s St Cecilia’s Hall and the keyboard instruments there, most of which he has recorded for the Edinburgh-based label, Delphian Records. He has also made many organ recordings, including three on the Usher Hall organ.

In 2017 he was awarded an MBE for services to music.

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