

Virginia Black

Internationally acclaimed harpsichordist and pianist

*"...a communicative artist, extrovert, colourful, spontaneous but with a deep sense of poetry"
The Gramophone*

Beginning in her early 20s, Virginia has pursued a dazzling worldwide performing career spanning nearly 5 decades, initially specialising in the virtuoso harpsichord repertoire ("*...one of the world's finest harpsichordists*" - Daily Telegraph) and has made many critically acclaimed recordings, TV and radio appearances.

Her harpsichord style was a dramatic change from that of the other leading players of the day, featuring the instrument itself prominently and consisting largely of the virtuosic repertoire. Reactions to her concert performances lead to her playing being characterised as "*...authoritative, elegant and with the obvious enjoyment of the virtuoso passages.*" and "*...genuinely describable as exciting and thrilling...*"

Her recording of the Goldberg Variations, perhaps the most famous and virtuosic of Bach's compositions for the harpsichord, was "first choice" in Gramophone and "collectors choice" in Classic CD, in a direct comparison with recordings made by several acknowledged 'greats' of harpsichord performance – Andras Schiff, Wanda Landowska, Gustav Leonhardt and Glen Gould. Her recording was described as a "*...a superb, life-enhancing issue*".

Since 2010 she has returned to her roots as a pianist and she travels the world playing both her previous Baroque harpsichord repertoire - including JS Bach, CPE Bach, Mozart, Rameau, Scarlatti and Soler - and also major piano works from later periods including Beethoven, Debussy and Chopin.

Her consummate musicianship has always captivated audiences and has been described as '*intimate*', '*thrilling*', '*authoritative*', '*communicative*' and '*gorgeously inflected*'.

Virginia started playing the piano aged 7. Her talent was soon recognised and, through a subscription funding with family and friends, she was lucky enough to be given her first grand piano at age 12 – a Bechstein – which she still has and plays with pleasure. After winning many piano competitions in her early years, she made her 'senior' public debut at the age of 17, playing Beethoven's 3rd Piano Concerto with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

She subsequently won a scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) in London, with the piano as principal study, where she won the Lillian Davies Beethoven Prize and the Dove prize; she also gained the inter-college Raymond Russell Prize for harpsichord performance and was awarded DipRam for her final recital.

Whilst playing the harpsichord, which she had taken as a second study, her precocious talent was soon recognised and she made her debut as a solo recitalist at Wigmore Hall in London, at the age of 20, whilst still a student at the RAM. She received rave reviews from national newspapers such as the Times, Telegraph and Guardian and was much in demand from then on for public recitals, recording for CDs and for radio and TV, and appearances at international festivals such the Prague Spring Festival and the York early music festival. She has subsequently performed in many of the world's major concert venues such as London's South Bank and Kings Place, Sydney Opera House and the Theatre Grévin in Paris.

In 2010 Virginia decided to return to her roots as a pianist, initially playing some of the Baroque repertoire so familiar to her from her harpsichord career. Having been something of a pioneer on the harpsichord, she now championed bringing the solo keyboard repertoire of Bach, Mozart, Scarlatti and Rameau to the piano. She was passionate to show how the modern grand piano could be used to enhance the works of Bach, Scarlatti and Rameau in particular through singing tone and tonal nuance.

She has significantly broadened her piano repertoire, which now includes keyboard works by Beethoven, Debussy, Chopin, Handel and Haydn in addition to her previous baroque repertoire, and she is adding some more modern works. Virginia continues to be much in demand internationally for her recitals, recordings and performance masterclasses.

In parallel with her performing career, Virginia continued her role at the Royal Academy of Music as a professor of harpsichord and in 1998 was appointed chair of postgraduate studies and senior postgraduate tutor. She also continued to give performance classes to advanced students of all instruments.

Virginia is a Fellow of the Academy (FRAM) an honour limited to 300 members. It is "Awarded to alumni who have distinguished themselves within their field, commanding national or international recognition."