

Sheku Kanneh-Mason

Sheku Kanneh-Mason is the 2016 BBC Young Musician, a title he won with a stunning performance of the Shostakovich Cello Concerto at London's Barbican Hall with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. In April 2017, Sheku returned to the hall for another performance of the concerto, this time with the National Youth Orchestra and Carlos Miguel Prieto after which the Guardian wrote that "technically superb and eloquent in his expressivity, he held the capacity audience spellbound with an interpretation of exceptional authority" and the Telegraph acknowledged "what a remarkable musician he already is, bringing other-worldly tone to the haunting slow movement and displaying mature musicianship in his handling of the extended cadenza"

Only eighteen years old, Sheku's international career is developing very quickly with engagements in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 seasons including the CBSO, the Philharmonia Orchestra at the Newbury Spring Festival, a return to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, Barcelona Symphony, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra (his debut at the Concertgebouw), Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra (Sheku's concerto debut in North America), Louisiana Philharmonic, and the Seattle and Atlanta symphonies. He will also return to the BBC Symphony Orchestra to perform the Elgar Concerto in his hometown of Nottingham and make his debut at the Vienna Konzerthaus with the Japan Philharmonic. In recital, Sheku has several concerts across the UK with highlights over the next two seasons including his debuts at Kings Place as part of their Cello Unwrapped series, Milton Court, and Wigmore Hall. He will also perform a series of concerts in Canada in December 2017, and further recitals at the Zurich Tonhalle, and the Lucerne Festival.

In 2016, Sheku performed at the BBC Proms in the Park in Wales and returned to make his Proms debut at the Albert Hall in summer 2017 with the Chineke! Orchestra, an ensemble with which he enjoys a special relationship having taken part in their debut concert at the Royal Festival Hall in 2015, returning as soloist to perform the Haydn Concerto with the orchestra in April 2017: "You aren't ever going to hear this Haydn Concerto more engagingly performed" The Arts Desk.

In February 2017, Sheku performed an arrangement of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" for Cello and String Trio at the BAFTAS Awards show at the Royal Albert Hall, an interpretation which brought the celebrity-filled audience to their feet and which has subsequently been shared and viewed by nearly two million people on social media sites. He has an exclusive recording contract with Decca Classics and his first concerto recording for the label will be released in 2018.

Sheku began learning the cello at the age of six with Sarah Huson-Whyte and then studied with Ben Davies at the Junior Department of the Royal Academy of Music where he held the ABRSM Junior Scholarship. In September 2017, he started a full-time degree course at the Royal Academy, studying with Hannah Roberts. He has received masterclass tuition from Guy Johnston, Robert Max, Alexander Baillie, Steven Doane, Rafael Wallfisch, Jo Cole, Melissa Phelps and Julian Lloyd Webber and in July 2017, participated in the Verbier Festival Academy in masterclasses with Frans Helmerson and Miklos Perenyi. A keen chamber musician, Sheku performs regularly as a member of the Kanneh-Mason Trio with sister, Isata and brother, Braimah.

Sheku is passionate about the importance of making classical music accessible to all and is the first London Music Masters Junior Ambassador. With his siblings, the Kanneh-Mason seven-piece ensemble, he has performed in many venues across the UK including at Marlborough House in front of HRH Prince Charles for Commonwealth Day and on ITV's Britain's Got Talent, both in the semi-finals in 2015 and then as special guests on the final show in June 2017 performing with dance group, Diversity.

He plays an Antonius and Hieronymus Amati cello c.1610 kindly on loan from a private collection.

Reviews

“Kanneh-Mason gave an astonishingly assured performance. The strength of Kanneh-Mason’s approach was that it was so nuanced; this, plus his technical command, led to a memorable account.”

[Classical Source, April 2017](#)

“Last year’s BBC Young Musician winner, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, returned to the scene of his victory with the same work, the Russian composer’s First Cello Concerto. Digging in with gripping attack yet also plenty of nuance, he showed what a remarkable musician he already is, bringing other-worldly tone to the haunting slow movement and displaying mature musicianship in his handling of the extended cadenza”

[The Telegraph, April 2017](#)

“Technically superb and eloquent in his expressivity, he held the capacity audience spellbound with an interpretation of exceptional authority.”

[The Guardian, April 2017](#)

“Kanneh-Mason is a player who makes you tune in to every nuance of articulation, every subtle shading, every eloquent turn of phrase. Here, joined for this same concerto by his fiercely talented peers in the National Youth Orchestra, he showed us why he won the competition. He performed with urgency and bite, impeccable technique and, in the second movement, exquisite line as the cello sang its sotto voce hymn to the night.”

[The Times, April 2017](#)

“Many of the enthusiastic audience had clearly come to see last year’s BBC Young Musician winner, the cellist [Sheku Kanneh-Mason](#). They were rewarded with a stylish performance as the soloist in Haydn’s Cello Concerto in C (Hob VIIb/1). In the central adagio, Kanneh-Mason balanced expressive singing tone with careful, instinctive, dynamic shading. He took the allegro molto at fearless, breakneck speed, the passage work impressively controlled. A solo encore was further testimony to his prodigious gift, and his arrangement of a traditional Jewish song was plangent and subtly elaborated.”

[The Guardian, April 2017](#)

“[Kanneh-Mason’s] own cadenzas have compelling musical logic, his pianissimos were magical, his encore arrangement of a Jewish folksong spellbinding; ... you aren’t ever going to hear this Haydn concerto more engagingly performed.”

[The Arts Desk, May 2017](#)