

Amersham Concert Club

Saturday 27 November at 7.30pm

Alexei Watkins – French Horn, Harry Rylance – piano

A Celebration of the Centenary of the Birth of Dennis Brain

Horn Sonata in F Major, Op. 17	Beethoven
Elegie (In Memory of Dennis Brain)	Poulenc
Firebird Suite: Berceuse and Finale (Solo Piano)	Stravinsky arr. Agosti
Appel Interstellaire (Solo Horn)	Messiaen
Alla Caccia	Abbott
<i><u>Interval</u></i>	
Q&A	
Villanelle	Dukas
Nocturno, Op. 7	F. Strauss
Parsifal Flower maidens Scene (Solo Piano)	Wagner arr. Kocsis
Romance, Op. 36	Saints–Saens
Hunter's Moon	Vinter

Dennis Brain (1921 – 1957) was a very distinguished British horn player and was largely responsible for popularizing the horn as a solo classical instrument with the public. He made what many consider the definitive recordings of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's horn concertos and he was responsible for a huge number of pieces being added to the repertoire by many contemporary composers. He came from a musical family and his father was also a virtuoso horn player. As principal horn of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra from its foundation after the war he achieved a world wide reputation. His legendary tone and facility of playing amazed others and he also demonstrated his sense of humour by performing a Leopold Mozart horn concerto on rubber hosepipes at a Gerard Hoffnung music festival in 1956. At a Los Angeles party, after a group of proficient local horn players had lined up to try to get a note out of his favoured early 19th-century instrument, without success, he played the Flight of the Bumblebee flawlessly.

2021 is the centenary of his birth and these two exciting young musicians have put together a Horn and Piano recital celebrating his life.

London-based French Horn player Alexei Watkins graduated from the Royal Academy of Music with a Bachelor of Music Degree (First-Class Honours). During his time at the Academy, amongst other accolades, he was awarded the Dennis Brain Prize. As a soloist, Alexei has performed recitals extensively across the UK at venues including St John's Smith Square, the Buxton International Festival, the Lincolnshire International Chamber Music Festival, Blackheath Halls, Hampton Court Palace, Southwark Cathedral and Charlton House, Greenwich. Recently he has performed the Britten Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings both in the UK and abroad as well as Mozart's 3rd and 4th Horn Concertos.

In 2019 Alexei won the University of London Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition. He is a keen orchestral player and has guested as Principal Horn with Glyndebourne Touring Orchestra, English National Opera and RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra. He has also played with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé, London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, London Sinfonia, Britten Sinfonia and was Principal Horn of the Britten Pears Orchestra (2015–2017).

Alexei will introduce the pieces and talk about playing the French Horn.

Harry Rylance is an award-winning pianist who has performed in some of the world's most prestigious concert halls including the Royal Festival Hall, the Royal Albert Hall, the Wigmore Hall, the Grand Hall of Budapest, the Seoul Arts Centre, the Glenn Gould Concert Hall, and at numerous international music festivals including Heidelberg, Aspen and Dartington. He has performed live on BBC Radio 3 and "From The Top," America's leading classical music radio programme, and has performed with orchestras and ensembles including the London Sinfonietta, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Liszt Academy Symphony Orchestra, the Liszt Chamber Orchestra, Boston Civic Symphony Orchestra, the Nash Ensemble, the Royal Manson Ensemble, and the Royal Academy of Music Orchestra. He graduated with first class honours from the Royal Academy of Music and has been tutored by some of the world's greatest artists and teachers such as Joanna MacGregor CBE and the late Zoltán Kocsis.

He is the recipient of numerous awards including the Christian Carpenter Recital Prize, the Isaacs and Pirani Piano Trio Prize, the Elena Gerhardt Accompaniment Prize, and the May Mukle/Douglas Cameron Prize. He was awarded the Skelton MA scholarship, generously supported by the Grand Duo Charitable Trust, to continue postgraduate work at the Royal Academy of Music.