



program publicity

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CLASSICAL DESTINATIONS

**A new 13-part documentary series
Begins Sunday January 22
6pm**

Classical Destinations introduces a new concept in travel and history on television, exploring Europe's most spectacular cities and landscapes while revelling in the great classical music composed within them. Viewers will learn about the lives of the master musicians, the cities they lived in, and how their work reflects the very same surroundings familiar to us today.

Presented and narrated by the celebrated British actor and music expert Simon Callow (*A Room with a View, Four Weddings and a Funeral, Shakespeare in Love*), *Classical Destinations* begins on Sunday, 22 January, 2006 at 6pm. Throughout the series, Callow offers his personal reflections on some of the greatest classical composers while visiting the European cities in which they lived and worked. Seeing the world through the composers' eyes was a revelation for Callow. "It is inconceivable that Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms and others would not have responded viscerally to their surroundings," he says. "Equally, one can learn a great deal about cities and countries by listening to the music written there. It's two-way traffic."

Callow's association with music is known internationally through his work in Peter Shaffer's play *Amadeus*. He created the title role of Mozart when the play premiered at the National theatre in 1979, and when *Amadeus* was turned into the multi Academy Award-winning film in 1984, he played the part of the impresario Schikaneder.

Callow is joined in his storytelling by 23-years-old Australian violin virtuoso Niki Vasilakis – who performs on location throughout the series – and her antipodean colleague Matt Wills.

Callow begins his journey in Mozart's birthplace of Salzburg, describing the city's antique splendour and reflecting on how the wunderkid's music was affected by the place in which he spent much of his short life. Salzburg is only the first stop in the series, which is a modern-day equivalent of the age-old cultural Grand Tour – a scenic and sonic parade that is both beautiful and moving.

Classical Destinations travels through much of Europe: the fjords of Norway with the music of Grieg; Finland's primeval forests and Sibelius; the Venice of Vivaldi; Puccini's villa on the Torre del Lago in Tuscany; the travels of J.S. Bach through eastern Germany; Beethoven's birth city of Bonn; the Prague of Smetana and Dvořák; Tchaikovsky's St Petersburg – and much more.



Episode one – January 22

Salzburg: Birthplace of Amadeus

The hills around Salzburg were alive long before Julie Andrews started running up them! In the first episode of *Classical Destinations*, Simon Callow, Niki Vasilakis and Matt Wills introduce viewers to the birthplace of classical music's ultimate superstar, and tell of the infant Amadeus' most prodigious exploits. This city is the city of the Salzburg Festival, famous puppet shows, and the belated arrival of the musical with which Hollywood took Salzburg to the world.

Episode two – January 29

Across Austria to Vienna

Simon, Niki and Matt follow Mozart through magnificent Austrian countryside from Salzburg to imperial Vienna via Linz; the irresistible magnet for composers such as Brahms, Mahler, Schubert and Haydn. Their stories and their relationship with the magnificent Hapsburg capital are described amid the city's great landmarks.

Episode three – February 5

The Real Song of Norway

In this third episode, viewers will take a journey through the spectacular mountains, ravines and fjords of Norway, from Bergen to the capital Oslo, as *Classical Destinations* follows the life of the country's most beloved composer – Evard Grieg.

Episode four – February 12

Finlandia

The elemental sights and sounds of Finland, from Helsinki to the snowy vistas of Lapland where Santa has his workshop, are captured in the music of Sibelius. Viewers will hear the story of the Finnish musical legend, visit the composer's home of Ainola, and hear his most famous musical work.

Episode five – February 19

St Petersburg

Episode five of *Classical Destinations* visits the former capital of Russia which, with its canals earned it the description "Venice of the North". St Petersburg was also home to the composers Borodin, Glinka, Mussorgsky, and the naval-officer-turned-musical-painter of the Arabian Nights, Rimsky-Korsakov.

Episode six – February 26

Venice, Vivaldi and The Four Seasons

Antonio Vivaldi spent his most productive years in Venice in the early 18th century. Simon, Niki and Matt tour the canals, bridges and piazzas for which Vivaldi created the perfect soundtrack in his *Four Seasons*.



Episode seven – March 5

Prague

Smetana serenaded its river; Dvořák started out as a dance band fiddler; Mozart enjoyed his greatest successes here. This week *Classical Destinations* visits the Old Town, where Simon Callow reminisces about filming *Amadeus* in its beautifully preserved streets.

Episode eight – March 12

Germany – Eisenach and the Towns of Bach’s Travels

Classical Destinations follows the young J.S. Bach’s career path through eastern Germany from his birthplace in Eisenach to Arnstadt and Weimar. In the Wartburg castle we learn about the rebellious monk, Martin Luther and the birth of the Reformation.

Episode nine – March 19

Germany – Leipzig and Mainz

The careers of Bach and Mendelssohn reached their height in Leipzig. In today’s episode, Niki performs part of Mendelssohn’s *Violin Concerto* and we visit the Schott publishing house in the city of Mainz to learn the craft of music engraving and look at the original manuscript of Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*.

Episode ten – March 26

Vienna

The last difficult years of Mozart’s short life; Beethoven’s tragic deafness; the glamorous but turbulent life of the great ‘Waltz King’, Johann Strauss the Younger – all of these took place in Vienna. Niki exchanges her violin bow for a baton to conduct the *Blue Danube* with a virtual orchestra in the House of Music.

Episode eleven – April 2

Tuscany: Verdi and Puccini

More than just one of Italy’s most beautiful regions, Tuscany also produced two of the greatest operatic composers. *Classical Destinations* visits the towns that shaped their lives: Lucca, Pisa and Milan. There is also a tour of the Puccini Villa in the spectacular Torre del Lago.

Episode twelve – April 9

Bonn and Berlin

Classical Destinations follows Beethoven’s troubled early life in his birthplace of Bonn, near which descendants of his family still live and work as winemakers. Then to an indisputably modern city: Berlin, home to one of the world’s greatest orchestras.

Episode thirteen – April 16

St Petersburg

In the series finale, *Classical Destinations* returns to St Petersburg to meet and review some significant figures in its history: Pushkin, Catherine the Great and Rasputin. Our last tour of the current series features the music of the composers Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky.

For interviews or preview material, please contact the publicist Kathryn Hibbert on

(02) 9430 3709 or 0410 509 332.



Simon Callow – Biography

Actor and director, Simon Callow, is also renowned throughout the U.K. as a writer and commentator on classical music.

Simon studied briefly at Queen's University, Belfast, then trained as an actor at Drama Centre London. After seasons in repertory at Lincoln and at the Traverse in Edinburgh, he made his London debut in the Traverse Theatre production of C.P. Taylor's *Schippel*. From 1975 to 1978 he appeared in a number of theatres in a variety of roles culminating in the title role in *Titus Andronicus* at the Bristol Old Vic and in Bertolt Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* at the Half Moon Theatre.

Simon's extensive stage credits include *The Alchemist*, *Amadeus*, *As You Like It*, *The Importance of Being Oscar*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and *Through the Leaves*. In 2000, he played in *The Mystery of Charles Dickens*, which, after playing two seasons in the West End, he took to Ireland, Australia, Chicago, and New York.

His films have included *Postcards From the Edge* and *Phantom of the Opera*, and he directed *The Ballad of the Sad Café* which starred Vanessa Redgrave, Keith Carradine and Rod Steiger. Simon's television credits include *Angels in America* and the current series of *Dr Who*. He has starred in several one-man shows and directed many productions.

He has appeared in the operas *Die Fledermaus*, *La Calisto*, *The Consul* and the musicals *Carmen Jones* and *The Woman in White*. He is also an author whose published works include many books on actors and acting as well as highly-acclaimed biographies of Charles Laughton and Orson Welles and a memoir called *Love Is Where It Falls*.

Niki Vasilakis – Biography

Widely regarded as one of the most exciting violinists to have emerged in Australia in recent years, Niki Vasilakis has a busy international schedule of concerts and recordings that have made her name familiar to a wide public.

She commenced her violin studies in Adelaide at the age of four, and has since received numerous awards, including the Elder Conservatorium Concerto Prize, the Nelly Apt Scholarship, and the Perry Hart Memorial Prize (twice). In 2003 she won the String Final of Symphony Australia's Young Performer of the Year.

Now one of this country's busiest soloists, Niki has performed with the Melbourne, Sydney, Tasmanian, Queensland and Wellington Symphony Orchestras. International orchestras with whom she has performed include Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra of China and the Prague Symphony Orchestra. With the latter she has recorded her debut album of violin classics, which will be released in 2006.

She is passionate about a successful musician's social responsibilities and maintains an involvement in volunteer programs, and teaching for community groups. Niki has recently been appointed as an Ambassador for World Vision supporting their humanitarian work globally with a focus on women's rights and support to Africa's Children with AIDS.

