

*Legendary Casals' disciple HIRAI returns to Wigmore Hall*

**Takeichiro Hirai** *cello*

**Motoki Hirai** *piano*



*“A complete musician possessing exceptional technique  
and musical taste. He will be my successor.”*

**PABLO CASALS**

**Monday 8 June 2009 at 7.30 pm**

36 Wigmore Street London W1U 2BP

Director: John Gilhooly

The Wigmore Hall Trust  
Registered Charity No. 1024838  
[www.wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://www.wigmore-hall.org.uk)



## *Takeichiro Hirai* cello

Takeichiro Hirai (b.1937) is regarded as one of the most distinguished cellists of his generation. His appearance in London after an absence of several years, comes as part of a European tour which includes performances in Denmark, Spain, Romania, Bulgaria and France with his son Motoki Hirai.

Takeichiro Hirai is one of the last survivors who inherited the legacy of great masters from the late 19th and early 20th century, having associated with Villa-Lobos, Shostakovich, Khachaturian, Britten, Kreisler, Cortot and Segovia. He has also collaborated with artists such as Menuhin, Stern, Horszowski and Serkin. Since his sensational debut in 1961 playing 4 concertos (Dvorak, Schumann, Lalo and Boccherini) under Pablo Casals conducting, Hirai has been performing regularly across the globe, appearing as a soloist with the world's leading orchestras and as a recitalist in venues such as Wigmore Hall (London), Salle Gaveau (Paris), Musikverein (Vienna), Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), and Carnegie Hall (NY).

Hirai has been honoured with many prestigious awards including the first prize at the Japan Music Competition (1954), the Prix Extraordinaire at the 1st Pablo Casals International Competition in Paris (1957) and the Composer's Union Prize at the Tchaikovsky International Competition (1962).

Takeichiro Hirai studied the piano and composition with his father, the renowned composer Kozaburo Hirai, before starting his cello studies under Hideo Saito at the Toho Conservatory of Music in Tokyo. In 1957, Hirai, at the recommendation of Gregor Piatigorsky, went to Puerto Rico to study with Pablo Casals for five years. In 1961 at a press conference in New York, Casals noted: *'I have taken him with me throughout all of Europe, and I have taught him all that I know. He will be my successor!'*

In 1979, he played three concertos (Haydn, Saint-Saens and Dvorak) with the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra in a single concert as both cellist and conductor to huge critical acclaim. In 1988 Hirai was invited by Nancy Reagan as special guest artist at the First World Cello Congress held in Washington, D.C. where he was a soloist as well as member of the cello quintet which involved Tortelier and Rostropovich. Besides his prolific activities as a cellist, Takeichiro Hirai is an avid composer of symphonic works, chamber music, choral music and lieder. He has been the chairman of the Association of Composers and Authors in Japan since 2003. He has made over 30 critically acclaimed recordings with labels including Sony, RCA and EMI.

*“Takeichiro Hirai is a most accomplished cellist. His playing is distinguished by classism of style, sensitivity of phrasing, beauty of tone and impeccability of intonation”*

THE STRAD (LONDON)

*“Takeichiro Hirai admirably reconstructs the styles of the masters of all horizons.”*

LE FIGARO (PARIS)



## *Motoki Hirai* piano

Widely acclaimed as one of the most imaginative pianists of his generation, Motoki Hirai appears regularly in the music capitals of Far East, America and Europe as a soloist and recitalist. In the UK he has performed in St. George's, Bristol, and London venues including the Wigmore Hall and the South Bank Centre. Highlights of the 2009/10 season and beyond include piano concertos with Czech Virtuosi in Prague and Bruno, as well as concert tours across Europe and Japan.

Motoki is equally at home with chamber music and lieder. As a composer, Motoki has been commissioned to write new works which have premiered in prestigious venues such as the Tokyo Opera City, NHK Hall, Wigmore Hall and the Chelsea Flower Show 2008. His music has also been used in films such as 'Voice' (2004) and 'The Emperor's Tram Girls' (2005). As part of 2005 EU-Japan Year of People-to-People Exchanges, Motoki gave a highly successful solo recital on Europe Day at St. John's, Smith Square in London, premiering of his own works alongside standard repertoire, which was repeated in Tokyo, supported by the European Union.

Born into a highly gifted musical family, Motoki studied piano and composition with his grandfather, the eminent composer Kozaburo Hirai, and violin with his grandmother. Since his first professional appearance at the age of 13 playing his own piano compositions to great critical acclaim, he has been highly active in both performance and composition. After reading philosophy and aesthetics at Keio University in Tokyo, Motoki came to London in 1996 to study at the Royal Academy of Music.

Over the years, Motoki Hirai has given freely of his time to perform for the promotion of world peace and for people in need worldwide in association with international organizations such as the British Red Cross, the Motor Neurone Disease Association and UNESCO. As an artistic emissary of the Japanese government, Motoki has visited countries such as Sri Lanka, Portugal, Malaysia and Denmark since 1994. He has broadcast internationally on radio and television (Classic FM, BBC and ITV) and has made a number of recordings on CD. His most recent release is the new re-mastering of the works for solo piano 'MOTOKI HIRAI Piano Works' (2006/2009) supported by Steinway & Sons, which received much critical acclaim.

*“a most brilliant and sensitive musical talent”*

THE GUARDIAN

*“consistent musicality ... Being a composer himself has endowed the performer a special insight into the works of others, enabling him to capture the essential character of each composition.”*

SUNDAY TIMES



# Programme

**CAIX D'HERVELOIS** Suite No.2 in D minor  
**BEETHOVEN** Cello Sonata No.5 Op.102/2  
**SCHUMANN** Fantasy Pieces Op.73

*Interval (20 minutes)*

**Takeichiro HIRAI** Fantasy for Cello Solo 'Hokusai' *UK Première*  
**BACH** Arioso from *Cantata* BWV156  
**GRANADOS** *Andaluza* from 12 Spanish Dances Op.37/5  
**CASALS** Song of the Birds (Catalan Folk Song)  
**Kozaburo HIRAI** Narayama from 'Lieder' *EU Première*  
(arr. T. Hirai)  
**DAVIDOV** At the Fountain Op.20/2

In aid of **UNICEF**  
Registered Charity No. 1070212

*With support from:*



**Special thanks to:** Embassy of Japan, Japan Society, Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Nippon Club, Eikoku News Digest, Claudio Records, Steinway & Sons.

**Tickets:** £22, £18, £14, £10

**How to Book**

**In person:** 7 days a week; 10am – 8.30pm. Days without an evening concert 10am – 5pm.  
*No advance booking in the half hour prior to a concert.*

**Telephone:** 020 7935 2141

7 days a week; 10am – 7pm. Days without an evening concert 10am – 5pm.  
*There is a £1.50 administration fee for all telephone bookings, which includes the return of your tickets by first class post.*

**Online:** [www.wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://www.wigmore-hall.org.uk)

7 days a week; 24 hours a day.  
*There is a 50p administration fee for online bookings, which includes the return of your tickets by first class post.*

**Facilities for Disabled People:**

Please contact  
House Management on  
020 7258 8210 for full details.



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