

CLASSICAL DESTINATIONS

Renowned actor, writer and music specialist Simon Callow ("Rome," *Amadeus*) leads a new experience in travel and storytelling: an exploration of the history and major attractions of some of Europe's most beautiful destinations revealed through the lives and music of great classical composers who lived there. The armchair guide to classical music features violinist Niki Vasilakis performing the music for each destination onscreen against dazzling High Definition images of each location, as the narrative demonstrates the interplay of the composition and the place of its creation, illustrating how these masterpieces reflect the cities today.

CLASSICAL DESTINATIONS is for viewers with wanderlust for the most magnificent cities of the world; those who were spellbound by the film *Amadeus*, and its glimpses into the turbulent and uplifting world of a great musician; and that ever-increasing sector of the travel industry known as 'cultural' tourism.

A gifted trio of presenters tells these stories in words and music:

Simon Callow, one of Britain's most recognizable actors, and a respected writer and commentator on classical music, brings the stories of Mozart (whom he portrayed in the first production of Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*), Beethoven, Bach, Puccini and many others to life with an idiosyncratic mix of insight, authority and charm;

Niki Vasilakis, still in her early twenties but already hailed as an exciting young violin virtuoso, performs musical masterworks onscreen against dazzling European surroundings (including **CLASSICAL DESTINATIONS**'s brilliant and original theme music);

Matt Wills, an acclaimed writer/performer for stage and television.

The music in **CLASSICAL DESTINATIONS** is more than mere 'soundtrack': it is both the subject and driving force of each episode's narrative, demonstrating the fascinating interplay of music and the place of its creation.

This unique combination of scenery and sound is revelatory; as Callow notes,

...it is inconceivable that the great composers would not have responded viscerally to their surroundings. For instance, once you see where Grieg lived in Norway, you can understand how intrinsic the feel of landscape is to his work. Hearing the famous Peer Gynt music, you imagine forests full of trolls and goblins, the fjords and lakes, cool misty dawns.

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CLASSICAL DESTINATIONS captures the primeval forests of Finland and the music of Sibelius; the Rococo splendor of Salzburg and the world of the child Mozart; the brilliant light of Venice and the corresponding clarity and vivacity of Vivaldi's Four Seasons; the grandeur of the German cathedrals and their counterpart in the architectural majesty of Johann Sebastian Bach's masterpieces.

Over one hundred hours of High Definition was edited to create the series 13, half-hour episodes. Producer/director Peter Beveridge and his crew filmed on location in St Petersburg, Salzburg, Linz, Esterhazy, Vienna, Helsinki, Prague, Venice, Berlin, Leipzig, Eisenach, the countryside of Tuscany, and the coastlines of Norway and Denmark.

Callow joined the crew on location to film his musical reflections before returning to London to record the narration.

Beveridge shares some of the series highlights: "Much of the performance footage with Niki is breathtaking," he says. "Playing Mozart's music in the Hall of Mirrors in the Schönbrunn Palace, where the six year-old Wolfgang performed for Marie Antoinette; or Bach's music for solo violin filmed next to his grave in St Thomas' Church in Leipzig, where he worked for 30 years – these were standouts."

Viewers will see the handwritten original manuscript of Beethoven's great Ninth Symphony, plus a performance by the angelic Vienna Boys' Choir. "We had a beautiful surprise when we visited the grand-daughter of Sibelius," continues Beveridge. "She played a work written by her grandfather on his original violin, which he gave to her when she was 14 and he was 90."

Landscape, music and history on television have never felt so vividly alive.

Presented nationally by WLIW New York. 13, 30-minute episodes. Rating: TV-G. ST and CC.
Producer/Director: Peter Beveridge.

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