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The Baroque Met the Balkans in an Intriguing Kings Place Concert



As the BBC Symphony Orchestra ended its season at the Barbican, Wigmore Hall was embarking on its renewed summer series of Wigmore Lates, programmes at 10pm to follow the main evening recital; and at Kings Place, a sort of junior Wigmore on the other side of the city, where programming strands typically stretch across a calendar year, the Baroque Unwrapped series continued with a most unusual presentation. The 11 string players and the harpsichordist of Geneva Camerata, conducted by David Greilsammer, with the flamboyant clarinetist Gilad Harel, brought their evening-long (but it was a fairly short evening) sequence of baroque pieces interspersed with traditional Balkan and klezmer dance music, given without any breaks, as though a composite opus.

A strange hybrid indeed, for what was the organic connection between this art music — including a Vivaldi overture (*L'Olimpiade*), Bach's Double Violin Concerto and Telemann's E minor Oboe Concerto (with the solo part transferred to clarinet) — and this letting-of-the-hair-down music? Not very much, perhaps, though the Balkan excursions (as arranged by Sergei Abir) were as remarkable for rhythmic complexity as for wildness. Transitions between items were subtly managed — cadential flourishes on the harpsichord let unlike segue into unlike. It was an enjoyable, odd programme, and the freewheeling fluency of Harel's clarinet playing was certainly arresting.

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Paul Driver