

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**BIRMINGHAM CONTEMPORARY MUSIC GROUP**

**FAMILY CONCERTS**

Conductor: **Christian Karlsen**

**Toy stories told through contemporary music**

**Sunday 26th January 2014 at 11.30am & 2pm**

**CBSO Centre, Berkley Street, Birmingham B1 2LF**

[**www.bcmg.org.uk**](http://www.bcmg.org.uk)

Toys, dreams and games are the themes which link the musical choices in the 2014 edition of **Birmingham Contemporary Music Group**’s perennially-popular **Family Concerts** (CBSO Centre, Birmingham: Sunday, January 26– 11am & 2pm).

**Thomas Adès**’ early masterpiece *Living Toys* occupies pride of place in a programme which also takes in quirky sonic invention from underground cult group **Modified Toy Orchestra,** giving abandoned electronic toys new life. There are fresh sounds from some familiar musical toys – a musical box and two melodicas – together with **Colin Matthews**’ contemporary take on a Mozartian musical dice game.

Created in collaboration with Birmingham-based theatre company [**Stan’s Cafe**](http://www.stanscafe.co.uk/) for the second year in succession, BCMG Family Concerts introduce children and their families to the world of contemporary music; the hour-long performances are often playful but never patronising.

The January concerts, under the musical direction the young Swedish conductor **Christian Karlsen**, weave music inspired by toys, dreams and games with theatrical and visual elements to a create colourful and engaging experience performed by BCMG’s top notch musicians.

**More about the programme:**

**Richard Baker *Crank*Richard Baker/Brian Duffy *Game I, Tandy*Richard Baker/Brian Duffy *Game II, Speak & Spell*Colin Matthews *To Compose Without the Least Knowledge of Music*  
Arne Gieshoff** (2014 BCMG**/SaM Apprentice Composer-in-Residence)**

**new work (World Premiere)  
Thomas Adès *Living Toys continued/…***

The musical wizardry of **Thomas Adès** conjures a child’s imaginary dream world in Living Toys, complete with angels and matadors, armies and heroes, and a giant computer in deepest space. With an ensemble of 18 players, this is the largest and most ambitious work that BCMG has yet presented at its Family Concerts.

Broken electronic toys scavenged from car boot sales are transformed into sophisticated musical instruments, and take their place in the BCMG ensemble, through the imagination of composers **Richard Baker** and **Brian Duffy** with the [**Modified Toy Orchestra**](http://www.modifiedtoyorchestra.com/). Duffy and the MTO set about discovering the musical potential of redundant electronic toys – remember those Speak and Spell kids computers from the ‘70s? - converting them into new, strange and wonderfully sophisticated musical instruments.

The musical box is perhaps most associated in classical music with Brahms’ Lullaby and the Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker Suite. In composer **Richard Baker**’s hands, it becomes a vehicle for a very different kind of sound in his composition *Crank.*

BCMG’s newly appointed Apprentice Composer in Residence for 2014, **Arne Gieshoff** has written a trio for trombone and two melodicas especially for the Family Concerts. He wants the short piece to sound like “a broken, mechanical toy that is unwinding, forming all sorts of bizarre shapes”.

In **Colin Matthews**’ witty update of Mozart’s musical dice-game, *To Compose Without the Least Knowledge of Music*, for wind sextet, chance operations produce a series of comical variations which halt abruptly, leaving the listener hanging, mid-cadence. The result is a whimsical, slightly bizarre set of dances, whose 18th-century origins move unpredictably in and out of focus.

***There will be a fun activity café an hour before each performance – please turn up early and enjoy the whole Family Concerts experience!***

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**Booking Information**

**Tickets:** £5 (adults and under 16s) / £15 (group ticket) plus transaction fee\*  
No charge for children under 3 years of age.

Group ticket admits four people – including at least one adult and two children.

**Ticket Line: 0121 345 0491**

**Online booking:** <https://tickets.thsh.co.uk/event/bcmg-family-concert1/book/5379>

**In person** at Symphony Hall, Broad Street, Birmingham, B1 2EA or at CBSO Centre on day of performance

\*A £2.50 fee per transaction will be charged on all bookings, except purchases made in person.