

Fly on the Wall's 'The Collection' presents a vivid portrait of classical music in the UK and Europe today

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56 films selected from over 300 behind-the-scenes classical recordings over the last ten years



Cellist Steven Isserlis (Photo: Stewart French)

Fly on the Wall launches *The Collection* (2025-2025), a documentary project by musician and filmmaker Stewart French. This unique online exhibition offers an unfiltered behind-the-scenes look at classical musicians' performances.

The Collection presents 56 curated films drawing from more than 300 behind-the-scenes shoots including never-before-seen footage from the project's extensive archives. The final project presents a compelling collection of video portraits, documenting musicians doing what they do best - performing live - up close and under a microscope.

From early music ensembles to cabaret trios, classical guitar quartets to percussion collectives, the exhibition showcases over 40 artists across a broad stylistic spectrum. It's a vivid portrait of classical music in the UK and Europe today. Featured names include The King's Singers, Steven Isserlis, Alina Ibragimova, Richard Goode, The Choir of Clare College Cambridge, La Nuova Musica, Colin Currie, Marc-André Hamelin and Boris Giltburg.

Filmed in a signature single-camera, handheld style, French's approach brings viewers inside locations such as Wigmore Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Henry Wood Hall, and Ehrbar Saal. Accompanying each film is a written narrative offering behind-the-scenes insight and context, untold stories from deep within the creative process.

French explains: 'As a performer myself, I've always been drawn to the raw, unfiltered magic that happens behind closed doors — moments of focus, anticipation, creative flow. With *The Collection*, I wanted to capture those flashes of vitality that sit at the very heart of music-making.'

The third subset of *The Collection* is titled *New Music* and features footage from 2015-2018 and is focused on a community of producers, engineers, artists and labels dedicated to producing records. Here French examines the landscape of classic music in the UK through new and contemporary music projects. For example, the below video from 2016 which shows Marc-André Hamelin during his sessions with Hyperion. They captured the Hamelin during the opening sessions of the three day recording in this single 10 minute take.



In Exhibition 3: *New Music* they also filmed cellist Steven Isserlis at Henry Wood Hall in 2015. This was the occasion of his recording of the Walton Cello concerto. They had arranged to film some footage of Steven recording the challenging solo cadenza. However when they arrived the cadenza had already been recorded earlier in the day. French explains in the notes of the clip: 'once the recording day was over Steven was clearly exhausted. But true to his word, with the orchestra now gone, he stepped back into the empty hall lit with just our two solitary spotlights. Pausing for thought, he seemed to change his mind. "The Fall of the Leaf..." he whispers. The cadenza now a distant memory, this film is a document of those few magical minutes.'



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