

Seven Eight Artists

Svyati Duo

Rebecca Hepplewhite, cello | Julian Collings, organ

Duo Biography

Widely acknowledged as the world's leading cello and organ duo, cellist Rebecca Hepplewhite and organist Julian Collings of the **SVYATI DUO** are celebrated by audiences and critics alike for their fine performances and eclectic recordings. They are committed to performing music that brings the best out in their unique instrumental combination, performing an ever-changing programme of original works, transcriptions, and new commissions.

Since its formation in 2009, the Svyati Duo has performed worldwide in venues of all sizes, from churches and town halls to major cathedrals and concert halls. Highlights include performances at the Hong Kong Cultural Center (where they played to an audience of two thousand), St Paul's Cathedral in London, Tokyo University Concert Hall, and a concert at Worcester Cathedral, which included a performance of their original transcription of Elgar's Cello Concerto.

They undertake numerous engagements throughout the USA, and in 2020, were invited to perform two recitals for the American Guild of Organists National Convention in Atlanta.

The duo takes its name from Julian and Rebecca's first collaboration as conductor and cellist in a performance of Sir John Tavener's masterpiece 'Svyati' for solo cello and choir. Tavener subsequently became the duo's patron the following year until his death in 2013. Rebecca and Julian have recorded two CDs on the Regent Records label to unanimous critical acclaim. The duo also features regularly on BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio 3, Lyric RTE, and American Public Media's 'Pipedreams' broadcast. Their third album will be released later this year.

In their concerts, Rebecca and Julian explore a rich and diverse repertoire, from Baroque sonatas and chorale preludes to substantial romantic and contemporary works, including many newly commissioned works and transcriptions. Their passion for breathing life into this neglected genre has rewarded them with the discovery of many forgotten masterpieces, and their passion for new music has led them to commission works from leading composers, including David Bednall, Russell Hepplewhite, Colin Riley, Iain Farrington, Timothy Salter, and Christopher Schmitz. They were honoured that Naji Hakim dedicated a new version of his 'Suite Rhapsodique' to them in 2025.

Svyati Duo is represented by Seven Eight Artists.

Current as of November 2026.
No alterations may be made to this biography without the permission of Seven Eight Artists.

Artist Biographies

REBECCA HEPPLEWHITE performs internationally as a cellist and has given recitals throughout Europe, the USA, Asia, and South Africa, with notable chamber and solo engagements including appearances at the Wigmore Hall, Bridgewater Hall, and Purcell Room. She is cellist with the Pomegranate Piano Trio and enjoys a busy freelance orchestral career performing and recording with many of the UK's leading chamber orchestras. A strong advocate of new music, she has commissioned and premiered many new works, both with the Svyati Duo and with other ensembles. Recent solo engagements include performances of the Elgar and Dvořák Concertos.

JULIAN COLLINGS was educated as an organ scholar at Tonbridge School in Kent before gaining an organ scholarship to Christ's College, Cambridge in 1999, studying under David Sanger and Thomas Trotter. He is currently Director of Music at St Cyprian's Church, Clarence Gate in London, a post which he combines with a busy international performing career as an organist and conductor. In addition to his schedule with Svyati Duo, he conducts three London choruses, appearing regularly at prestigious London venues including Smith Square and Cadogan Hall. Julian also regularly performs organ duets with Benedict Lewis-Smith as the Oxbridge Organ Duo.

Acclaim

'The duo has quickly risen to prominence in the UK and beyond through its innovative programming and exceptional musical standards. Both performers are artists of the highest order. Rebecca Hepplewhite combines unbridled passion with brilliant virtuosity, richness of tone and color, rhythmic control, superb intonation and musical sensitivity. Julian Collings combines technical aplomb with collaborative sensitivity and stylistic understanding. This is an excellent representation of an instrumental pairing that deserves to be heard more often'

The American Organist

'In the cello-organ arrangements of three Bach chorale preludes, Hewes's restricted role of voicing the chorale tunes may have seemed diminished, but her contributions were effortlessly elegant. Rheinberger's own arrangements of three of his Six Pieces for violin and organ op. 150 allowed the young cellist to display a fondness for more expansive lines and to exude a powerful but never overwrought expression. In the more modern idiom of the Variations on a Hungarian Chorale by Budapest-born Gardonyi, Hewes brought drama to the often low-lying cello part, occasionally offset brightly by bracing organ cluster chords.'

The Strad Magazine

'Cello-organ duos are not exactly thick on the ground. Indeed, the question that immediately comes to mind is whether the cello can hold its own in such a tandem...As the music on this CD proves, the answer to that inquiry is an unqualified "yes"—and the partnership for the most part even proves felicitous. The performances are exemplary. Rebecca Hewes has a sumptuous, mahogany tone and bold arresting sound, and plays with both power and delicacy as required. Julian Collings is an able accompanist with an excellent ear for apt choices of registrations and stops.'

Fanfare Magazine

'The players are excellent in all the many styles they portray, from gentle lyricism to powerful drama to kooky sound effects. This is a fine release.'

American Record Guide

'The pairing of organ and trumpet is well known; less so that of organ and cello. So it's good to welcome a recording that makes such a strong case for it. Yorkshire-born Rebecca Hewes, a cellist of great talent, is partnered by another fine young musician, Julian Collings, in a programme that includes works by Rheinberger and Dupre. Highlights are the bubbling Humoresque of Jongen and a thoughtful new piece, Invisible Landscapes, by Russell Hepplewhite. A splendid enterprise.'

Yorkshire Post

'Music for organ and cello is not a common thing in the recording studio, though it happens often in the real world. The blend is a natural, as this program demonstrates...Altogether a very listenable program, played with conviction and beauty of tone.'

American Record Guide

'An adventurous program of works for Cello and Organ performed by two fine players and recorded in a very fine acoustic...In a program of 19th- and 20th-century works, they adventurously explore textures and literature for their instruments in a sympathetic and well-recorded acoustic.'

Organ Historical Society

'Here is a varied program of 20th Century compositions for cello and organ mingled with transcriptions of earlier music, played with fervor and taste by two young British musicians who are blending their talents in discovering and commissioning this kind of repertoire. The recorded sound is rich and satisfying, and so is the playing.'

American Record Guide

'The Syvati Duo program and performance in February exceeded every expectation, and the live acoustic and the setting of St. John's gave their program a mystical, transcendent quality, transcending time and place in every way.'

Denver Drawknob

Testimonials

'Svyati wowed us with their musical sensitivity and a poetry that one doesn't often find. The sounds of the organ and the cello blended one into the other, at times becoming wonderfully difficult to distinguish. It was true ensemble collaboration at its best.'

Frank Zilinyi - Artistic Director - The Music Series at South Church, New Britain, CT, USA

'The Svyati Duo blew me away. They brought a completely new perspective to our iconic Cathedral Organ in our huge acoustic, managing to make it all balance perfectly. The repertoire was absolutely fascinating, and went from warmly romantic to unexpected and novel, always with the highest level of integrity. The cello sounded so rich, and the organ never dominated, despite being one of the loudest organs in the country. Could not recommend highly enough.'

John Robinson - Director of Music, Blackburn Cathedral, UK

'An outstandingly brilliant and beautiful recital'

Alexander Woodrow - Organist & Director of Music, Leeds Minster, UK

'The Svyati Duo gave a stunning concert in Huddersfield Town Hall on 5th October. Their sound-world suited the space perfectly, and we were thrilled to hear established classics such as Bruch's stirring Kol Nidrei alongside newer works by Pēteris Vasks and Ad Wammes. In addition to their fine playing, both Rebecca and Julian engaged superbly with the audience through their helpful and informative introductions to the pieces they were playing. We look forward to welcoming them back!'

David Pipe - Huddersfield Town Hall Organist, UK

Both the program and the collaboration exceeded our expectations. The sensitive use of the organ and the fantastic sound of the cello harmonized perfectly. The audience was thrilled and responded with a standing ovation. Overall, a highlight of this year's organ summer.

Erhard Stern, Presenter, Langenhorn Orgelsommer

'It was as lyric and expressive a concert as I have ever presented. The program was enticing. The maturity and charm of the performance compared to the most legendary names easily. The audience was enthralled and, most to the point, the university president himself asked me to ensure the Svyati Duo's return to the series. Such was the immediate interest piqued by the artists, their clear uniqueness, and the utter charm of their communication with our important audiences here.'

Haig Mardirosian | Presenter - University of Tampa, FL, USA

'The Svyati Duo filled the cathedral with magnificent music in a finely crafted concert for organ and cello. Julian Collings elicited enchanting sounds with his masterful use of the organ's resources, perfectly balancing the lyrical musical lines Rebecca Helpplewhite coaxed from her cello. And there was no lack of dazzling technique in works by Wammes, Boulanger and Dupre! The Duo excels with a perfect musical blending of organ and cello.'

Paul Monachino - Presenter | Our Lady, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Cathedral, Toledo, OH, USA

'It was a true privilege to host Svyati Duo as part of the St. John's Artist Series. This fantastic ensemble drew in the audience with their first note and kept them spellbound through the end of the encore. Rebecca Hepplewhite's and Julian Colling's masterful playing is a remarkable combination – I cannot wait for their return to St. John's!'

Andrew Paulson | Minister of Music - St. John's United Church of Christ, Lansdale, PA, USA | Artistic Director - St. John's Artist Series

'Thank you so much for the wonderful concert the Svyati Duo provided on April 10 for our concert series. It was a very refreshing and enjoyable program, and it was inspiring to be introduced to some new repertoire. Rebecca and Julian are each superb musicians and complement each other so beautifully. The sound of the cello and organ together was exquisite.'

Sarah Hawbecker - Director of Music | Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Atlanta, GA, USA

'Thank you both again for what was the concert highlight of my summer this year, hearing you both as the Svyati Duo. Your program was engaging and educational, providing multiple avenues of new experiences for our audience. We were delighted with the world premiere of Russell's Fanfare and grateful for that unique opportunity. But for me, the star was the Rheinberger, Jongen and the Wammes. These three pieces showed the versatility of the organ, but also demonstrated different experiences of organ and cello together. Audience members are still commenting about how moving the 'In croce' of Sofia Gubaidulina and how emotion filled Rebecca's playing was on this piece. You both were a joy to be around and I was sad to see you leave at the conclusion of our time together. It is rare to see musicians that are a testament to the creation of music - you are engaged, dedicated, and committed. Thank you so much for a glorious few days together. '

Steven Betancourt - Presenter | Loyola University, Chicago, IL, USA

'It was wonderful to experience your lovely performance last Sunday. Every piece was a joy—the beautiful organ colors and the rich cello tone...what an amazing combination!'

Christopher A Schmitz - Composer & Professor of Music | Mercer University, Macon, GA, USA

'Clever and dynamic in both personality and presentation, the artists of Svyati brought much pleasure to our Sunday afternoon audience, which was wooed and wowed by the unique combination of tones from both musicians. They WILL be invited to return!'

Dennis McCleary - Director of Music | Vineville United Methodist Church, Macon, GA, USA

'The Svyati Duo appeared on the Tuesday's Music Live in Augusta, Georgia, the country's largest luncheon concert series. More than 400 people gave the Duo a well-deserved standing ovation for a spectacular performance. Ms. Hewes' cello technique was incredible and what a great combination with the organ which was skillfully managed by Julian Collings. We enjoyed their concert tremendously and look forward to a return engagement.'

Keith Shafer - Artistic Director | Tuesday's Music Live, Inc., Augusta, GA, USA

'A kaleidoscope of colours and styles: they played with confidence and panache, connecting immediately with the audience.'

John Fenstermaker - Presenter | Bower Chapel, Moorings Park, Naples, FL, USA

'Thank you for your wonderful concert here last spring. You are absolutely delightful people and your performance at Westminster was brilliant! The Gubaidulina was especially powerful and riveting.'

Al Fedak - Presenter | Westminster Presbyterian Church, Albany, NY, USA

'Like a fine wine that perfectly complements the meal, the sound of a cello accompanied by an organ proved to be a delightful combination when The Svyati Duo, featuring Rebecca Hepplewhite, cellist, and Julian Collings, organist, performed on the Heissler organ concert series of St. Petersburg College (FL) this past spring. These two performers conclusively proved themselves to be artists of the highest caliber. While experiencing the magnificent artistry of these two young people, I found myself listening with eyes closed and imagining that I was in Carnegie Hall. I am certain that the audience in attendance that evening felt the same way. The Svyati Duo has a fascinating and varied repertoire, and it was this repertoire that initially attracted my attention as a presenter. I was not disappointed in the least. Their concert wound up being one of the highlights of the season, and I can scarcely contain my enthusiasm to have them perform again in the future. For those who might wonder if the grandeur of an organ would overpower the intimacy of the cello-fear not. Mr. Collings is a master at picking the proper balance so as to best present both instruments, and Ms. Hepplewhie is quite successful at bringing out the complete range of dynamics and expressiveness that the cello can offer. On a personal note, I found both Rebecca and Julian to be down-to-earth, easy-going, and full of good humor. Presenters know to value highly the personal as well as the professional relationship! Please consider this to be a thoroughly confident endorsement of the artistry, dedication and professionalism that The Svyati Duo brings to the concert stage.'

Paul Dixon - Artistic Director | The Heissler Organ Concert Series of St. Petersburg College, FL, USA

'Rebecca Hewes' and Julian Collings' performance as Svyati Duo has been a real highlight of the 2012-13 season at Denver Cathedral. Julian's organ registration was masterful, finding color and power without overwhelming Rebecca's singing cello. His technique was flawless. The sound of Rebecca's cello was as mesmerizing as its player who commanded our aural attention through the sheer beauty of her playing. The program was varied - from Bach to Gárdonyi to Bednall. In addition, they are personally delightful and communicated exceedingly well with the audience.'

Stephen Tappe - Organist & Director of Music | St John's Cathedral, Denver, CO, USA

'We experienced a perfect blend of musicality and musical interpretation by two extraordinary performers in a consummate presentation of compositions. In addition to their technical proficiency, the kindness and warmth of their personalities shine through their performances.'

Lee Afdahl - Presenter | A Festival of Music Concert Series, First Presbyterian Church, Rochester, MN, USA

'The rare instrumental combination gave an exceptional performance capturing the audience's attention like never before. In this "pipe organ" concert, the cello took a dominating role with its unique tender voice and demonstrated some unthinkable harmonies with the organ through the specially selected programme.'

Hong Kong Cultural Centre

'One of the highlights of our concert series was a programme by the Svyati Duo from England. Rebecca and Julian dazzled the audience with their virtuosity and lively programming. Our local audiences are not attuned to truly contemporary classical music, and yet Svyati Duo were able to project the music in a delightful and engaging way. It was great fun to listen to, and the audience, from seasoned musician to 'buffs' were enjoying the programme as much as I was. This unusual pairing of organ and cello has a fascinating repertoire. We heard the organ and cello do things that I didn't know they could do. Then I did myself an enormous favour and purchased a CD from the duo, and have been luxuriating in even more music for this genre. We'll have to have the Svyati Duo back again - this is good stuff!'

Angela Saunders - Presenter | St George's Church, Germantown, TN, USA

'On Friday evening 12 February, the Syvati Duo performed at St. Paul's Church, Bristol Parish, Petersburg, VA. They delivered a stellar performance of varied and captivating repertoire. Of course, the combination of cello and organ is not commonly heard, which made the program even more interesting. Rebecca produced sonorous, warm tones, displaying mature expression and solid intonation and technique. Organist Julian Collings supported cellist Rebecca Hewes with tasteful, colorful registration and musical, precise playing. The organ

balanced perfectly with the cello at all times. I spoke with many of the audience members following the performance, all of whom were very impressed with and gratified by the concert. All in all, this duo is first-rate. As organist and choirmaster of St. Paul's, Bristol Parish, I maintain a monthly concert series and highly recommend the Syvati Duo.'

Charles Lindsey Jr - Director of Music | St Paul's Church, Petersburg, VA, USA