🎹 **Title:**

**Mozart’s Piano Returns: Labèque Sisters and McNulty Fortepianos in London**

📃 **Short Description:**

In April 2025, Katia and Marielle Labèque joined Marc Minkowski and the English Baroque Soloists for performances at the Musikverein in Vienna and St Martin-in-the-Fields in London. Both programs featured historical fortepianos by Paul McNulty, after Anton Walter — Mozart’s favorite piano maker — offering a vivid glimpse into the Classical sound world.

📝 **Main Text:**

In April 2025, a special concert titled **"Original Sounds"** took place at **St Martin-in-the-Fields** in London, bringing together the **English Baroque Soloists** under **Marc Minkowski** with the renowned **Labèque sisters**, Katia and Marielle. The program focused on Mozart and was performed entirely on historical instruments — most notably, **McNulty fortepianos** modeled after the Viennese instruments of **Anton Walter**, the piano builder favored by Mozart himself.

Katia and Marielle Labèque have been active performers on fortepianos since the early 2000s. Over the past two decades, they have collaborated with leading period ensembles and conductors, including the English Baroque Orchestra with Minkowski, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment with Sir Simon Rattle, Il Giardino Armonico with Giovanni Antonini, Musica Antiqua Köln with Reinhard Goebel, and the Venice Baroque Orchestra with Andrea Marcon. Their concert with Il Giardino Armonico at the Musikverein in Vienna was broadcast internationally and marked a milestone in their historical performance journey.

Just days before the London performance, the same Mozart program was presented at the Musikverein in Vienna on April 25, 2025, also featuring the Labèque sisters on McNulty fortepianos after Anton Walter. In both venues, the choice of instrument allowed audiences to experience Mozart’s music with clarity, intimacy, and authenticity — in venues where the Classical tradition still resonates most profoundly.

This London appearance marked a continuation of their longstanding commitment. Both fortepianos played by the Labèque sisters were fortepianos built by Paul McNulty, based on models by Anton Walter (1752–1826). Walter was one of the most significant piano makers of the Classical period, holding the title of Chamber Organ Builder and Instrument Maker in Vienna. He is credited with refining the Viennese fortepiano action, and his workshop is estimated to have built over 700 fortepianos, based on period sources and the widespread presence of his instruments during his lifetime.

Walter’s instruments were highly regarded in their time, and Mozart is known to have acquired one around 1782. According to his son Carl, Mozart kept this particular instrument always at hand and used it exclusively in both public and private performances. Carl wrote: “Most remarkable is the wing-shaped Pianoforte for which my father had a special preference to such a degree that he not only wanted to have it in his study all the time, but exclusively used this and no other instrument in all his concerts, regardless of whether they took place in court, in the palaces of noblemen or in theatres or other public places.”

The Walter fortepianos made by Paul McNulty are the result of extensive research into original instruments and historical sources. By using these replicas, performers are able to explore the unique tonal character and response of the instruments Mozart knew — their clarity, lightness, and capacity for nuance. The performance at St Martin-in-the-Fields offered the audience a chance to experience this sound in the acoustics of one of London’s most iconic venues.

Reviews from the Vienna performance praised the Labèques and the English Baroque Soloists for their elegance and finesse. One critic noted how “the slow movement was sung in a beautiful way, lightly and freely,” and how the ensemble played “so colorfully, in such a refined and high-quality way, and at the same time with such joy.” These qualities were also present in the London concert, where Mozart’s music came across with both intimacy and expressive breadth.

This event reflected a broader revival of interest in Mozart’s piano and in historically informed performance. The use of fortepianos in a modern concert setting is no longer a novelty, but a valuable interpretive tool. In the hands of musicians deeply experienced with historical instruments, like the Labèque sisters, the fortepiano is not only a bridge to the past, but a way to re-express well-known repertoire with a fresh sonic palette.

Through concerts such as these, audiences are offered a deeper connection to the time of Mozart — not through imitation, but through careful listening, performance practice, and the use of thoughtfully reconstructed instruments like the McNulty Walter fortepiano. The result is a concert experience that feels at once rooted in history and alive in the present.