

Alexis Ffrench has high ambition. This exceptional pianist and composer who trained at the Purcell School, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Royal Academy wants to bring joy to a world of troubled times. He also wants to change the way people perceive classical music and to help make it more inclusive and democratic, more relevant to the society in which we live.

“I was watching the Last Night of the Proms recently and was struck by the lack of diversity in the audience” he says in the thoughtful manner in which he considers everything. “The next day, a commentator said: ‘Who says classical music is dead?’ and I was taken aback as I feel there is no room for complacency in this regard. Where classical music is concerned, we still have a major job to do in removing perceived barriers. It’s incredibly important to me, and I feel we all have a duty to speak out and encourage positive change.”

With aspirations as bold as those, it’s clear that Ffrench has the dedication and talent to bring about such a change.

Ffrench displayed the skills of a musical prodigy when he was little more than a toddler: “When I was four I started playing on the dining room table, because we didn’t have a piano.” he says. He copied the actions of a pianist, even though he had never had the opportunity to see one perform. In his head he was performing his Dad’s Stevie Wonder and Bob Marley records. Within a year Ffrench was jotting down string quartets in a little red book.

“That was a theme of my young life: knowing music before I was taught music,” he says, smiling at the memory of a talent that staggered his Jamaican parents. “I remember them saying: ‘He thinks he’s Mozart...’ They bought me a piano – a battered old thing which arrived on the back of a truck. My parents quickly realised I could play anything I could hear; I had perfect pitch.” All this before he’d even started school. From the age of seven until he was eighteen, Ffrench played in church every Sunday and at weddings and funerals, on high days and holidays. “That informed my ability to improvise. One Christmas my dad asked if I could incorporate his favourite song, Johnny Matthis’s ‘When A Child Is Born’, into the church’s processional music.” When no thunderbolt arrived and the roof didn’t cave in, Ffrench knew he was onto something. His natural-born adroitness on the piano took him to the best music schools in the country, where his talents shone. He could write down even the most complex musical score by ear. “When I hear music, I see it” he says.

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Says Ffrench of this inspiring collaboration with Modest!: “I love their ambition – it matches mine. They see my music as being able to reach a broad, mainstream audience in the same way as their pop artists. They see no delineation. In fact, my music might have fewer limitations, and the team at Modest! are clever enough to see that.”

Alexis Ffrench is currently preparing for the release of his debut album on Sony Music, ‘Evolution’. A stunning new recording that sees Alexis propel himself to yet further heights, and includes a selection of guest collaborators from international classical harpist Lavinia Meijer and Boston-based electro folk duo Tall Heights to The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Adam Klemans.