



# A CLASSICS FOR ALL EVENING

WITH RALPH KIRSHBAUM

ACCOMPANIED BY SHAI WOSNER

IN MEMORY OF PROFESSOR ERICH SEGAL

MIDDLE TEMPLE HALL, LONDON

6 March 2014

*Opening remarks by Boris Johnson, Patron of Classics for All:*

It is right to mark this concert by a great American musician and in honour of a great American classicist by asking ourselves the forbidden question: where do we find the true heirs of the classical tradition? Who are the greatest classicists of modern times? Are they in England or America?

It is an honour that has been contested for centuries. It would be fair to say that Italians passed the crown to the French, the French to the Germans, and of course the Germans blew their inheritance in 1933 with the result that we got the Fraenkel (Edward) who knew about Horace and America got the Fränkel (Hermann) with an umlaut who knew about something else, and in the last sixty years it has been evenly fought until today, when I believe London is finally pulling away from the competition.

Which city most resembles ancient Rome in its status as *caput mundi*?

More banks than New York... etc...

Which city corresponds to that Roman ideal of *plurimae gentes, unus populus*?

Who has the Elgin Marbles? – in spite of the efforts of George Clooney?

Where does the Owl of Minerva live? Bloomsbury!

And as Erich Segal has so tellingly emphasised that all Greek poetry was sung to music - let me ask you, which city has the most live music venues? London!

The muses have fled Parnassus and established themselves in Soho. And which is the last city in the world to preserve the great Homeric tradition by which Diomedes was able to leap on and off a moving chariot in *Iliad* Book V and elsewhere? London! The only place in the world to have defied the health and safety formalities and restored to our streets the hop-on hop-off, fall-over Routemaster bus that London commuters can be both *anabates* (one who mounts) and *katabates* (one who descends), if they please.

And where is the study of the primordial cultures and languages that are actually on the increase? In London, where more and more children are being given the keys to that limitless treasure house of the Latin and Greek classics.

Thanks to you all for coming along tonight and supporting a great cause!