

**LINCOLNSHIRE
INTERNATIONAL
CHAMBER MUSIC
FESTIVAL**

FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

13-17 JULY 2021



Welcome to the 2021 Lincolnshire International Chamber Music Festival

After a year of so much uncertainty, tragedy and such difficult times, we could not be more pleased to welcome you to the **Lincolnshire International Chamber Music Festival 2021**. We feel it is a miracle to be bringing back music into people's lives – essential to the soul. To reflect these turbulent times, this year's festival programme focuses on the themes of Love and Loss.

We were so disappointed that after so much planning, we were forced to cancel our Mayflower 400 programme last year, which was so particularly relevant to the history of Lincolnshire. Whilst we now bring you a fresh, new programme, we feel very lucky to have saved two programmes from last year – including **Britten Sinfonia's concert on 16 July** featuring the world premiere performance of *Voyage of the Mayflower*, commissioned by LICMF, as well as the opening concert 'Songs of Farewell', both with our **Artist-in-Residence, Mark Padmore**.

With Covid restrictions and Brexit laws making travel and performing for musicians increasingly challenging, we were worried about whether we could still keep 'International' in our festival name. However, our warmest gratitude goes out to guitarist **Morgan Szymanski**, who is travelling all the way from Mexico to open our festival and to Bulgarian-Canadian cellist, **Yoanna Prodanova** for closing it!

Sadly we could not re-invite all of the artists from last year, due to pandemic-related constraints, but we are excited to welcome back one of the UK's leading string quartets, the **Navarra Quartet**, who will play a dramatic and transcendental programme for us on 14 July, including one of Schubert's most loved works, his *Death and the Maiden* quartet.

I want to extend a huge thanks to one of the UK's most sought-after tenors, Mark Padmore, for his generosity in agreeing to be our Artist-in-Residence and I feel very honoured to team up with him for **two different programmes on 15 July, when we will perform two extraordinary song cycles by Schumann**, representing Loss and Love.

We must also sincerely thank our LICMF Festival Friends, Patrons and sponsors for all their support in making these concerts possible. LICMF is a charity and without the enlightened support of these individuals, we simply would not be able to hold our festival.

Finally, I wanted to thank the LICMF festival team, with all my heart, for offering to dedicate this year's festival to my late father and victim of the pandemic, **Dmitri Smirnov (whose music you can experience in the closing concert)**, as well as to all those that have suffered the loss of a loved one in these strangest of times. Please let us all come together for this festival of music and celebrate these lives!

ALISSA FIRSOVA LICMF Artistic Director

LICMF team

Artistic Director

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Programme Notes

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TUESDAY 13 JULY 3pm & 7.30pm

The Long Gallery, Doddington Hall



MARK PADMORE (tenor)

MORGAN SZYMANSKI (guitar)

- JOHN DOWLAND** *Second Booke of Songs or Ayres* (text anon.);
14. "Come ye heavy states of night" (1600)
- JOHN DOWLAND** *First Booke of Songs or Ayres* (text anon.);
17. "Come again, sweet love" (1597)
- STEPHEN MCNEFF** "A Certain Man" and "Eden Rock" from *Eden Rock* (text
Charles Causley) (2016)
- FRANZ SCHUBERT** *Nachtstück, D. 672* (text Johann Mayrhofer) (1819)
- FRANZ SCHUBERT** *Nacht und Träume, Op.43 No. 2, D. 827* (text Matthäus
Casimir von Collin) (1825)
- ALEC ROTH** *A Road Less Travelled* (text Edward Thomas) (1825)

* * *

John Dowland (1562-1623)

- (1) *First Booke of Songes or Ayres* (1597)
(2) *Second Booke of Songes or Ayres* (1600)

Come ye heavy states of night (2)
Come again, sweet love (1)
Nor, O now I need must part (1)

The English composer John Dowland (1563-1626) is widely considered "one of the most consummate composers, singers, and lute-players of the Renaissance period – and a remarkably 'contemporary' songwriter: a composer who demonstrated an innate sensibility for the creative setting of text for solo voice"¹. As with many musicians of this period, he enjoyed a number of key employment opportunities which often rendered his lifestyle nomadic and disrupted. He regularly drew on his own personal experience when penning his vast corpus of songs and as a direct result they often reflect a more melancholy and mysterious series of tropes.

The English lute *ayre*, in direct reference to the dramatic plays of the time, can be viewed as one of the "pinnacles of [...] Renaissance humanism – expressing the human condition in all its variety and drama"². The minimalist pairing of

solo voice and lute was a perfect vehicle in that endeavour: a beautiful sense of balance between the different elements that make a song. Dowland epitomized these elements and when his *First Booke of Songes* was published in 1597, it garnered significant public interest, being reprinted five times, in 1600, 1603, 1606, 1608 and 1613. This period created “an increased interest in lute practice and song accompaniment, with some twenty-one composers contributing to approximately thirty-five books of *ayres* over the next twenty-five years”¹³. Dowland’s *Second Booke of Songes* followed in 1600, and was dedicated to Lucy Russell, The Countess of Bedford. All the songs featured in the *First Booke* can be performed in four-part allocation, however many of the songs in the *Second Booke* “can be sung in a variety of arrangements, including both solo and ensemble options”¹⁴.

Dowland “incorporated many of the most popular musical forms of his time: the French *air de cour*, the Italian *madrigal*, dance music, the English *part-song*, the viol *consort song*, and the Italian *recitative*”¹⁵. His ability expertly to assimilate disparate forms – whilst at the same time exploring innovative approaches to melody, harmony, rhythm, counterpoint, and text rendered him a creative pioneer in the realm of both sung poetics and the fine art of instrumental accompaniment. The three songs featured in today’s recital represent the wide span of Dowland’s compositional craft, and reflects an equally wide range of human emotion and experience.

1-5. © Goodwin, 2018

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Stephen McNeff (1951-)

“A Certain Man” and “Eden Rock” from *Eden Rock* (2016)

Text by Charles Causley (1917–2003)

Stephen McNeff was born in Ireland but grew up in South Wales, where his teacher inspired a love of music and composition. After studying at the Royal Academy of Music, McNeff initially gained experience working in British theatres before moving to Canada, where he was invited to be composer-in-residence at the Banff Centre.

Until the early 2000s, McNeff’s name was mainly attributed to theatre practice, through his film noir operatic version of *The Wasteland* (1994), his many scores for

the Unicorn Theatre (including a highly- successful *Beatrix Potter Suite* in 2002), and through wind band scoring for *Ghosts* (2001). His opera *Clockwork* was written for young people in 2004; it is based on Philip Pullman's book of the same name, and premièred at the Linbury Theatre in the Royal Opera House. Following this and his appointment in 2005 to the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra as the first Royal Philharmonic Society/Performing Right Society Foundation Composer in the House, his reputation has continued to rise.

Eden Rock, commissioned by the BBC, is a cycle of four songs set to the poetry of the Cornish poet Charles Causley. McNeff was first inspired by the poem *Eden Rock* between 2005–2008 when he wrote the three-part *Secret Destinations*. “A Certain Man” and “Eden Rock” serve as a relaxed and poignant memoir of English life, with the final setting also serving as an elegy to the poet's parents (‘they are waiting for me somewhere beyond Eden Rock...’).

* * *

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Nachtstück (Nocturne) D. 672 (1819)

Text by Johann Baptist Mayrhofer (1787–1836)

“Every one of his songs is, in reality, a poem - on the poem he set to music ... Who among those who had the good fortune to hear some of his greatest songs does not remember how this music made a long familiar poem new for him, how it was suddenly revealed to him and penetrated to his very depth.”¹

The poet Johann Baptist Mayrhofer met Schubert in 1814. The two became close friends despite their contrasting personalities – “Mayrhofer was regarded as brooding and melancholic, whilst Schubert was ebullient and outgoing.”² Schubert was impressed by Mayrhofer's thoughtfulness, and as a result they grew close, generating more than thirty-six settings within a four-year period. Mayrhofer was deeply moved by Schubert's early death in 1828, and “all but gave up writing thereafter.”³ He first tried to commit suicide in 1831 and finally succeeded five years later. *Nachtstück* considers the parting thoughts of an ancient bard, who is seen in the opening lines wandering into a wood, where he sings his own elegy to the accompaniment of his harp, before death comes quietly to claim him.”⁴

1 Schubert's lifelong friend, Joseph von Spaun.

Nacht und Träume (*Night and Dreams*) (1825)

Text by Matthäus von Collin (1779–1824)

Nacht und Träume (*Night and Dreams*) initially stems from the winter of 1822–23, when Schubert completed several song settings of poems by the poet Matthäus von Collin. Collin “was considered an intellectual heavyweight, holding a Professorship of Philosophy at the University of Cracow and at the University of Vienna. Admired for his taste, kindness and ability as a critic rather more than for his writing, Collin’s conversation clearly caught Schubert’s interest on his visits to his household.”¹ Schubert composed this particular work *in memoriam* to the poet, who had died the year before. He also completed the composition while suffering the adverse effects of syphilis: a condition that would ultimately claim his life several years later.

The concepts of night and dreaming are of metaphoric importance within the broader Romantic aesthetic, representing unrequited love, death and the supernatural. Schubert’s slow-moving, serene contemplations are one of his most challenging for the singer, who must sustain the lines at a *pianissimo* (very quiet) dynamic throughout, whilst the piano “maintains a soothing rocking motion with a gorgeous harmonic shift at the outset of the second part to set up the image of dreams eavesdropping with pleasure.”²

1–2 © Johnson, 1989

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Alec Roth (b. 1948)

A Road Less Travelled (2017)

Text by Edward Thomas (1878–1917)

The English-born composer, Alec Roth, studied music at the University of Durham, and gamelan at the Academy of Indonesian Performing Arts (ASKI) in Surakarta, Central Java. From 1986 to 1989 he was holder of the Collard Fellowship, and in 2000 received a major grant to further his composition work from the Gulbenkian Foundation. Posts include Founder/Artistic Director of the Royal Festival Hall Gamelan Programme, and South Bank Gamelan Players (1987–91); Music Director of the Baylis Programme at English National Opera

(1988–93); Composer in Association, Opera North (1994–96); and Lecturer in Music, University of Edinburgh (2002–03). Roth now works as a freelance composer.¹

A Road Less Travelled is a solo cantata for tenor with guitar and/or strings, based on texts by Edward Thomas. It was commissioned by the Autumn in Malvern Festival, with Mark Padmore, Morgan Szymanski, and the Sacconi Quartet premiering the work in 2017. Roth was adamant that the cycle should be performed in this year: the centenary of Edward Thomas's death at the Battle of Arras. 'There was something I really connected to,' Roth explains. 'It's something to do with his directness of utterance. On the surface he uses plain, everyday language and it's only when you get to know it that you come to realise how clever that is – below the surface it's so beautifully constructed and so rich in metaphor. It's that combination of richness and simplicity which is so attractive. As soon as I read that particular poem, I could hear the music coming straight away.'²

Inspired to read the rest of Thomas's work, Roth 'realised there were probably seven or eight cycles' in the poet's oeuvre. It took him a long time to choose which texts to set for this particular work. 'I decided to focus the piece around this idea of the road, which recurs frequently in his work. He spent a lot of time walking around English country roads, and nobody writes about roads as he does. My sequence of poems are a journey along the road, from an initial starting point to the final song, which will be "Lights Out". It's like a journey to the battlefields of France.'³

Roth's principal reason for choosing this instrumental combination was that it felt like a return to his artistic roots. In the composer's own words: 'I don't connect [...] with the voice and piano tradition; I feel I have more in common with the early school of English song. John Dowland wrote for lute and viol consort - this is my equivalent, and I feel more sympathy with it.' Roth considers the work more akin to a solo cantata rather than a song cycle: 'It's not just comprised of songs – there are recitatives and *ariosos* too, so it's more mixed content'. In writing the piece, Roth 'wanted to commemorate Thomas's life and work, and to make something which is beautiful—music which the performers will enjoy performing, and the audience will find engaging to listen to'.⁴

WEDNESDAY 14 JULY 7pm

Grimsby Minster



THE NAVARRA QUARTET

Benjamin Marquise Gilmore, 1st violin; Jonathan Stone, 2nd violin; Sascha Bota, viola; Brian O'Kane, cello.

GIACOMO PUCCINI

Crisantemi (Chrysanthemums) in
C sharp minor (1890)

LEOŠ JANÁČEK

String Quartet no. 1, *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1923)

ALISSA FIRSOVA

If a thing loves, it is infinite... Op. 40 (2018)

GYÖRGY KURTÁG

XV “Arioso interrotto (di Endre Szervánszky)”: *Larghetto* from *Officium breve in memoriam Andreae Szervánszky*, op.28 (2002)

FRANZ SCHUBERT

String Quartet No. 14, D. 810 in D minor,
Death and the Maiden (1824)

* * *

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)

I Crisantemi (1890)

Giacomo Puccini was “born into a Tuscan family of church musicians and was expected to succeed his father, Michele Puccini, as ‘maestro di cappella’ at the San Martino cathedral in the small town of Lucca—a position that had been held by a Puccini for four generations”¹. Sadly, Michele died when Giacomo was only six years old, thus “the chain of succession was broken”², and Puccini was free to pursue his destiny.

At the age of fifteen, Puccini became inspired to write opera. In 1883, while attending the Milan Conservatory, Puccini composed a one-act opera for a competition; he did not win, but *Le Villi* was successful enough to put the young Puccini on a very different career path that led to him becoming one of the most successful and famous opera composers of all time. Puccini himself “acknowledged that his true talent lay “only in the theatre,” and so his non-operatic works are relatively few. However, the string quartet was a medium for which he had a certain affinity – as a conservatory student he composed a set of three short minuets and an unrelated scherzo for string quartet”³.

Puccini composed *I Crisantemi* (The Chrysanthemums) in response to the sudden death of a friend, Amadeo di Savoia, Duke of Aosta. Aosta was “a young

and ambitious Italian prince who was selected to assume the throne of the King of Spain after the Glorious Revolution of 1868” (Dalton, 2018). The “task of unifying a violent nation and restoring constitutional order under constant threat of assassination and civil war proved too great”⁴, and Amadeo abdicated in 1873 whereupon a Republic was declared. Amadeo returned to Turin, humiliated, and lived quietly until his death at the age of forty-four. It is not known how the friendship between Puccini and the Duke came about but it was of sufficient significance to inspire this poignant work, named in honour of “the official flower of mourning and heroism in Italian tradition”⁵.

Composed in just one night, *I Crisantemi* is a “single-movement elegy in ternary form based on two plaintive melodies in C-sharp minor”⁶. Puccini thought enough of this music to reuse some of it in his opera *Manon Lescaut*, composed three years later in 1893.

1–6 © Dalton, 2018

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Leoš Janáček (1854-1928)

String Quartet No.1(Kreutzer) (1923)

Between late-October and early-November 1923 *Janáček* composed a string quartet inspired by his reading of Leo Tolstoy’s *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Janáček was profoundly affected by Tolstoy’s themes of love - both inside and outside of marriage - and it was these studies of human condition that informed the composer’s ground-breaking work.

The story, heard by the author during a train ride describes a husband who “murders his wife in a jealous rage upon finding her with a violinist”¹, to whom he had brokered an introduction. The catalyst for the heightened feelings between the wife and the violinist—and the increasing intensity of the husband’s jealousy— “provide the inspiration for Beethoven’s *Kreutzer Sonata*, which the wife and the violinist perform for a small gathering”². The husband tells of the music’s terrible and dangerous powers, which ‘can incite people to abnormal actions.’ One day the husband “returns home unannounced and, finding them eating dinner together, stabs her to death in a frenzy”³.

Janáček “neither follows the exact sequence of Tolstoy’s *novella*, nor closely

models the core characters. Rather, he uses the raw material of the *novella*, with its powerful emotional content, to infuse his own musical material, juxtaposing snatches of one against the other".⁴ The quartet's opening theme characterizes the heroine (reminiscent of a Moravian folksong that Janáček admired). This theme recurs like a *leitmotif* in various guises throughout the quartet. The first movement is dominated by an assertive theme, which represents the husband. The *scherzo*-like second movement includes the rhythm of a polka and introduces the elegant musician Trukhachevski. The third movement "contains an allusion to Beethoven's *Kreutzer Sonata*, which was played by the lovers in Tolstoy's story during a musical soiree"⁵. The finale opens with agitated music that represents the husband's jealousy. As references to music from earlier movements recur, they are dominated by the haunting opening theme – "a recollection of the wife as she lies dying"⁵.

By the time of the quartet's premiere, Janáček's own life had been "profoundly affected by his unrequited love for Kamila Stösslová, a beautiful married woman more than thirty-five years his junior - whom he had met in 1917, and who inspired all of his late works"⁷. He and his estranged wife maintained a friendly relationship with the Stössels for the next ten years, but at the time of Janáček's death in 1928 his wife's jealousy had escalated to an obsessive level due to his deepening relationship with Kamila. Janáček's love interests had resulted in him straying outside of his marriage several times before, but Tolstoy's close examination of passionate extra-marital love seems to have "fully resonated during the composer's late, yet all-encompassing, love for Kamila"⁸.

1–3, 7–8 © Jaffe, 2016

4–6 © Horner, 2016

* * *

Alissa Firsova

If a thing loves, it is infinite Op.40 (2018)

Text by William Blake (1757–1827)

William Blake has always been a favourite poet of my father, who wrote about fifty works inspired by his texts. And to celebrate this fact, in January 2018, we gathered together with my family and a few friends for a "Blake Day", where we would trace his steps in London and read out his poetry at the various places where he lived and wrote. In his last address at South Molton Street, the director of the Blake Society left us with a quote, he told us it's the shortest

quote, but in another way the longest and sums up Blake's writings: "If a thing loves, it is infinite...". I was so moved by these words, and was inspired by the idea of saying so much with so few syllables. It reminded me of a piece I wrote when I was sixteen for clarinet and piano, where I tried to represent "Eternity" in two minutes. And now I thought the next challenge could be to portray "Infinity" within eight minutes.

At the end of this Blake day, we went to see the Brodsky Quartet play at the magical, candle-lit Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. We bumped into Daniel Rowland before the concert and had a meal together, I told him about our day and this Blake quote, and he immediately said, "Wow, I love the sound of this, why don't you write a piece for my festival in Stift this Summer, inspired by these words!" And so I did... I found out that a chain of figures of eight symbolises infinity, so I tried to recreate this idea in the music: the first violin opens with a theme painting the shapes of a figure of eight chain, it then splits into two parallel lines, and then into three and into four lines, as the other instruments join, like a kind of *fugato*. Then the "love theme" appears, which is a quote from a work I wrote a few years ago called "Unity" for voice and piano based on a poem by American-Parisian poet, Peter Wolrich. The words sung to this theme are, "There, with the one that you love, you may unite together with the All". The opening *Fugato* then reappears, only this time inverted, which brings a darker emotion, showing another side of an idea of an infinite love, and the love theme itself is also then inverted with a feel of a reconciliation.

© 2021 Alissa Firsova

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György Kurtág (1926-)

Arioso interrotto (2002)

During the late-1980s Kurtág composed his third string quartet, in tribute to several friends and colleagues who has recently passed away, most notably the Hungarian composer, Endre Szervánszky (1911–1977). Szervánszky's name, in Latin, "forms part of the work's title and, in the original Hungarian, appears in the description of its final movement"¹. Szervánszky trained at the Budapest Academy of Music and, in 1948, was appointed Professor of Composition. In the same year he composed his *Serenade for String Orchestra*, "part of which Kurtág was to incorporate into his *Officium breve in memoriam Andreae Szervánszky*"².

The third movement of Szervánszky's Suite is marked 'Arioso' and Kurtág ended his work "with a transcription for string quartet of its first twelve bars before, as the title indicates, it is interrupted"³.

The *Officium Breve* (Brief Tribute) "also contains two further references to pieces in which Kurtág had paid homage to Szervánszky"⁴ and two to Anton Webern's *Cantata*, Op.31. The whole work is dedicated to Wilfried Brennecke, at whose Witten Festival in Germany it was given its first performance by the Auryn Quartet on 22 April 1989. There are also individual dedications to the cellist, Tibor Turcsányi, the mathematician and recorder player, Zsolt Baranyai, pianist, György Szoltsányi, and Kurtág's close friend, Gabriella Garzó.

1–4. © Avis, 2020

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Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

String Quartet No. 14 in D minor, D.810, 'Death and the Maiden' (1824)

The Maiden:

'Oh, leave me!

Prithee, leave me!

Thou grisly man of bone!

For life is sweet, is pleasant.

Go! leave me now alone!

Death:

'Give me thy hand, oh! Maiden fair to see,

For I'm a friend, hath ne'er distress'd thee.

Take courage now, and very soon

Within mine arms shalt softly rest thee!

Written in 1824, Schubert's fourteenth string quartet draws inspiration from one of his own *Lied*, *Der Tod und das Mädchen* (1817). The original *Lied* text, a Matthias Claudius poem, features a scene from a *Totentanz* (a dance of death) in which Death dances with a number of human partners, one of whom is the Maiden. Written at a time of escalating illness, Schubert's mental and emotional state was in notable decline and no doubt played a central role in the crafting of this seminal work.

'I feel myself the most unhappy and wretched creature in the world. Picture to yourself someone whose health will never be right again. . . someone whose most brilliant hopes have come to nothing, someone to whom love and friendship have nothing to offer but bitterness, someone whose creative inspiration (for all that it is beautiful) threatens to fail – and then ask yourself if that is not a miserable and unhappy being. Every night when I go to bed I hope never to awaken again, and each morning I am only recalled to yesterday's grief.'

A work of unrelenting intensity and drama, the quartet's funeral-like sonic qualities create a dark and melancholic atmosphere. Yet it is this "uniformity of character that renders the work so powerful"². A "compositional tour-de-force"³: Schubert excels in the areas of part-writing, texture, form, and colour. The first movement presents a defiant mood at the outset, with a dramatic opening gesture. Despite a lilting second theme, a dark atmosphere permeates, and the coda seems to close in musical sobs.

Schubert "fashioned the theme for the slow movement's variations not from the vocal melody of *Der Tod und das Mädchen* but from the piano prelude and select parts of the accompaniment"⁴. The simplicity of the insistent, grief-laden chords is ideal for the crafting variations. Schubert's fertile imagination is in full flight here - pensive chords are transformed into a lively version of 'hunting' music. The Finale, a "dark-hued *saltarello*"⁵, transforms into a *Danse Macabre*—its main theme resonating with another of Schubert's *hommages* to death—*Der Erlkönig*. The final movement is arguably one of Schubert's most dynamic offerings: with "several tempestuous climaxes and a breathtaking *prestissimo* conclusion"⁶.

1. Schubert, 1817

2–3. © Symons, 2015

4–6. © Jaffe, 2016

THURSDAY 15 JULY 3pm & 7.30pm

All Saints Church, Gainsborough



MARK PADMORE (tenor)

ALISSA FIRSOVA (piano)

CONCERT I: 3pm

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Four Piano Pieces (*Klavierstücke*), Op.119:
No.1 *Intermezzo* in B minor; No.2 *Intermezzo*
in E minor; No.3 *Intermezzo* in C major; No.4
Rhapsody in Eb major (1893)

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Kerner Lieder (texts Justinus Kerner) Op. 35
(1840)

* * *

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Vier Klavierstücke Op. 119 (1893)

“It really is marvelous how things pour from him; it is wonderful how he combines passion and tenderness in the smallest of spaces.”¹

In the final years of his life, Brahms spent time gathering “canons and folk song arrangements for publication”². Although “he considered himself retired as a composer, he did craft a select group of veritable masterpieces: new chamber music featuring the clarinet, four sets of short piano pieces, and eleven chorale preludes for the organ”³.

His last work for the piano was a set of four solo pieces, Op.119. Composed at the spa town of Bad Ischl in Austria, the material is imbued with a distinct sense of mortality, reflecting Brahms’ loss of close friends and family at this time. With striking similarities to previous compositions found within Opp. 116, 117 and 118, the pieces are notably melancholic, complex and deeply introspective; rich with rhythmic and harmonic ambiguities. Written with an uncanny disregard for the type of piano writing considered normal in late-19th century keyboard composition, Op. 119 seeks the exploration of new possibilities in harmonic and rhythmic craft. Harmonic changes “frequently occur on weak beats and metrical regularity is often attenuated by harmony notes held over from the previous bar”⁴.

The first *Intermezzo*, a poignant *adagio* in B-minor, is laden with descending thirds. Brahms wrote “Every bar, every note, must sound as in a *ritardando*, as if one would like to imbibe melancholy from each single passage”. In the second

Intermezzo, Brahms transforms an agitated, rhythmically insistent E-minor theme into a lyrical E-major waltz. The last of Brahms' *Intermezzos*, an ephemeral and joyous scherzo in C-major, plays games with metre and inner voicing. The concluding *Rhapsody* is the longest of Brahms's late pieces. A robust work, it begins in E-flat major, featuring "irregularly structured rhythmic features, in 'Hungarian-style' five bar phrases"⁵. The middle section transports the listener through "several curious and diverse byways before the main theme returns, only to conclude with a flamboyant, gypsy-like coda in E-flat minor"⁶.

1 Clara Schumann (a diary entry, after receiving the Op. 118 and 119 pieces from Brahms).

2–3 © Henken, 2021

4 © Gilsalon, 2017

5–6 © Vancouver Recital Society, 2021

* * *

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Kerner Lieder Op.35 (1840)

Text by Justinus Kerner (1786-1862)

Kerner Lieder is, surprisingly, one of the least known of all the great Schumann song cycles. The composer (who named the work *Liederreihe* – a 'row of lieder') crafted music that is not only notoriously difficult to sing, with equally demanding piano accompaniments, but also creates sonorities that seem to weigh heavier on the soul than in previous material.

The first cycle completed during Schumann's otherwise joyful and prolific 'Year of Song', and after his marriage to Clara Wieck, it is not surprising to hear evidence of a fundamental change in the composer's emotional and musical outlook. The long period of "fighting for Clara's hand had been exhausting and tense, and now that the composer had achieved his heart's desire the focal point of all his breathless creative activity had receded and changed. The day-to-day business of marriage cannot be built on sexual compatibility alone"¹. It was not "long before the question of husband's versus wife's career raised its head, and it was something which would remain ever-present. Clara was a great pianist and a composer in her own right, and no matter how much she attempted to carry out her duties as a wife and mother, she resented (if mostly silently), a marriage that had all but seemingly swept away a large part of her professional life"².

Schumann was already familiar with the poetry of Justinus Kerner when he began

the process of creating this song cycle. Whilst there is no obvious narrative (as in Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin* or *Winterreise*) there is, however, a "markedly strong relationship between the tonic keys of each song"³. Of particular note and beauty (and "widely considered to be the emotional climax of the cycle"⁴) is the tenth song, *Stille Tränen* (Silent Tears). Here, Schumann "imbues Kerner's brief three-stanza poem with raw emotion, revealing tears shed under the veil of night, beneath 'Heaven's wondrous blue'"⁵.

1-2. © Johnson, 1998

3-5. © Dubose, 1985

CONCERT 2: 7.30pm

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Winter Words, Op. 52 (texts Thomas Hardy)
(1953)

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Dichterliebe (texts from *Lyrisches Intermezzo*,
Heinrich Heine) Op. 48 (1840)

* * *

Benjamin Britten (1913-1967)

Winter Words, Op.52 (1953)

Texts by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

1. *At Day-close in November*
2. *Midnight on the Great Western*
3. *Wagtail and Baby*
4. *The Little Old Table*
5. *The Choirmaster's Burial*
6. *Proud Songsters*
7. *At the Railway Station, Upway*
8. *Before Life and After*

Winter Words: Lyrics and Ballads of Thomas Hardy, Op. 52, stands at the epicentre of Britten's diverse vocal oeuvre. The work was written in 1953 in between his operas *Gloriana* and *The Turn of the Screw*. Whilst "in no way

sacrificing the abundance of musical invention and imagery found in the [composer's] earlier song-cycles"¹, the textures of *Winter Words* are generally "sparser and more economic; resulting in stories that are projected with striking transparency and clarity"².

The title for the cycle was taken from the renowned English poet and novelist's Thomas Hardy's last collection of poetry, *Winter Words* (published shortly after his death in 1928). Britten's choice and settings of the selected poems focus on themes of loss of innocence through emerging consciousness, stressing the subtle alliance of youth and age. While the opening and closing songs are philosophically and lyrically reflective, the inner pieces present as lyric "ballads": brief narratives that tell stories of growing old, and becoming aware of our own mortality.

At day-close in November "evokes autumnal nostalgia bursting with a windswept November landscape, calming as the old poet remembers planting the trees and then realises that the children can't remember when the trees were not there"³. The second and seventh songs deals with train travel. The piano recalls the train's whistle and the movement of the engine as the boy in *Midnight on the Great Western* travels through the night, "arguably to the unknown"⁴. In *At the Railway Station, Upwaya*, a young boy with a fiddle attempts to cheer up a convict who is being taken to an unknown destination. In contrast, Songs 3 and 6 invite the listener to visit the natural world. A baby is "watching a long-tailed wagtail whose fluttering and drinking endures despite the appearance of various animals. Only when the human arrives is the bird frightened"⁵. In *Proud Songsters*, poetry and music "depict the sheer joy of birds who innocently live only in the present"⁶.

The two central songs "focus on memories of old men"⁷. The "sound of the creak of the table (*The Little Old Table*) heard in the piano establishes the 'now', whilst simultaneously recalling in the past, and portrays the realisation that future owners will never know the table's silent history"⁸. Perhaps the most complex story, *The Choirmaster's Burial*, is "drawn from Hardy's own family, notably his grandfather and father who were both string players in the village church band. The hymn tune *Mount Ephraim* is heard"⁹ as an underscore to the narrative of the "choirmaster's repeated request that this, his favourite hymn, be played by the band at his burial"¹⁰. However, the vicar "cannot be bothered to have music at the service—it would take too much time. His impatience, and the burial "without any tune", reflected in the abrupt piano part, transforms into gentle triplets when, miraculously, celestial musicians appear to play the choirmaster to his final rest"¹¹. The cycle concludes with one of Britten's most memorable songs,

Before Life and After. A “study in simplicity, Britten’s employment of repetitive left-hand chords with bare octaves symbolises a state of uncorrupted, primeval innocence – where the conflict between innocence and experience seems to be profoundly distilled.”¹⁵

I-9, 11-15. © Ryan Turner/Britten-Pears Library, 2018

10. © Whittall, 2007

* * *

Robert Schumann (1810 - 1856)

Dichterliebe Op. 48 (1840)

Texts by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856)

Heinrich Heine was “still a young university law student when, in 1823, he completed his second collection of poems, *Lyric Intermezzo*”¹. The prologue “introduces a knight-poet, crushed by the weight of the world, withdrawn from society, who in the small hours is transported to near-bliss by a radiant nymph”². He tries desperately to keep hold of this vision, only to awaken yet again to the dark loneliness of his room. The subsequent poems are “vignettes of love unfulfilled - either unrequited by the poet’s object of desire, or fated to failure by the poet’s own incapacities”³.

Schumann “first met Heine in 1828, shortly after publication of *Lyric Intermezzo*”⁴. *Dichterliebe* (Poet’s Love) was written twelve years later, and in fewer than ten days. During the crafting of the work, Schumann wrote “...how successful these songs may be in public, I cannot really say. I can say, however, that I have never before written anything with such love as when I was composing this group.” Schumann “composed more than half of his total song output in 1840, referred to as his ‘Year of Song’”⁵. His love for Clara Wieck, who became his wife in the August of the same year, provided fertile ground. Concurrently, Schumann was beginning to recognise that the larger musical forms (symphony, sonata, string quartet) were not developing in the direction he had expected, and he was prepared to look elsewhere for “the full flowering of ‘romantic’ music”⁶. This ‘elsewhere’ became the *Lied* (song in German). Furthermore, Schumann acknowledged that the piano “could play a highly significant role to play in vocal music – not mere accompaniment, but an equal partner”⁷.

In these sixteen songs, Schumann “perfectly captures the psychological

atmosphere of each poem”⁸. The piano writing, “as with Schubert, is of primary importance, particularly in defining the mood and character of each song”⁹. However, unlike his predecessor, “Schumann transported these moods to their greatest expressive heights via the piano postlude. All but two of the cycle’s songs end with a postlude, some of them nearly half the length of the song itself. The music, with few exceptions, is perfectly welded to the text, with painstaking regard to issues of meter, punctuation, and syllabic emphasis”¹⁰.

The opening song sets the scene - beautiful weather, flowers and birds - all part of the poet’s blissful love-evoked reverie. However, the affair is doomed, with the cycle tracing a progression of regret, pleading, reconciliation and forgiveness. By the final song, the poet is so inconsolable that he “prepares to silence his love, his sorrows and his dreams - in a coffin, in the depths of the sea”¹¹.

1-5, 11. © Hampstead Arts Festival, 2021

6-10. © Vancouver Recital Society, 2021

FRIDAY 16 JULY 7.30pm

Centenary Methodist Church, Boston



MARK PADMORE (tenor)

BRITTEN SINFONIA

Jacqueline Shave and Miranda Dale, violins; Clare Finnimore, viola; Caroline Dearnley, cello; Nicholas Daniel, oboe and cor anglais; Mark Taylor, flute.

- MOZART** Oboe Quartet in F major, KV 370/368b (1781)
- JON PAUL MAYSE** *Voyage of the Mayflower* (text Peter Wolrich) (2021)
LICMF Mayflower Commission
- BEETHOVEN** Trio for Flute, Violin and Viola in D major,
Op. 25 (1796)
- PETER WARLOCK** *The Curlew* (text W.B. Yeats) (1920–22)

* * *

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Oboe Quartet in A Major KV370 (1781)

In 1777 Mozart “encountered the outstanding playing of oboist Friedrich Ramm (of the Mannheim Court Orchestra), and acknowledged Ramm with a gift: his own Oboe Concerto”¹. Three years later, Mozart renewed his close working relationship with Ramm when he was commissioned by Elector Carl Theodor to write his renowned opera *Idomeneo*. In the early months of 1781, Mozart wrote the Oboe Quartet for Ramm, where he “explored the breadth of expression of the instrument, and tailored the score to showcase Ramm’s virtuosic skills, and recent refinements made to the oboe’s construction”².

Written much like a concerto, the Oboe Quartet features three movements. The opening movement, “a joyous *Allegro*, features an oboe melody full of grace notes and breathtaking fast passages”³. Toward the end of the movement, Mozart “unveils one of the technological advancements Ramm made to the oboe: the third-octave F”⁴. The contrasting plaintive second movement, a D-minor *Adagio*, “draws on Mozart’s innate skill in the art of operatic aria composition. With several recitative-like moments, it also highlights Ramm’s unique range”⁵. The theme of the *Rondo* closely resembles that of the previous *Allegro*. In standard rondo form, Mozart “develops the theme much like the first movement until, after the second A section, he begins the C section with a deceptive recapitulation in the subdominant key of B-flat major”⁶. Mozart swiftly changes the meter of the oboe into simple time (4/4), in separation from the strings who remain in compound time (6/8). The work concludes “on a resounding and joyous note”⁷, a fitting culmination to a remarkable work that forged new ground in oboe

performance and practice.

1-2. © Thouand, 2016

3-7. © Kalliwoda, 2017

Jon Paul Mayse

Voyage of the Mayflower (2021)

Text by Peter Wolrich

Voyage of the Mayflower follows the cataclysmic journey of the Puritans as they sought a new land to practice their revolutionary ideals: ideals of free religion and commerce. These ideals would shape the character of the young nation, one of dreamers and opportunists, zealous and myopic. From their perspective, from which this song is written, they hold high ideals which, truthfully, were oppressed within their native England. The Dissenters disdained the excesses and hypocrisies of the catechismal, saint-mediated Catholic Church and yearned for a communal, individually covenantal Church as outlined the Letters of Paul reliant on Scripture alone (which is the predominant theology in the US today). Their theology was, in its time, progressive, theological and politically, as it undid the hierarchies and exploitative power structures of the Catholic Church and the Church of England (though Puritanism famously invited greater moral oversight from the community and the focus on scripture still required an interpretive lens, not unlike the Catechism, delivered now in fiery sermons).

Along for the ride were, fittingly, agents of London merchants. They too sought a promised land, but of untapped economic potential, a kind of Capitalism with roots in imperialism (note that Spain was ending a century of immense, violent redistribution of wealth from their colonies in Central America to Europe, a feat which England had not yet managed). The English Merchant class was rising in power and the nascent Mercantilism would redefine the social hierarchies of the Kingdom. This voyage was the first successful English foothold in the New World and would give greater autonomy to the merchants who worked the Trans-Atlantic route. However, this extractive and colonial economic model would lead to devastation, seen clearly in the English/Scottish funded Cattle Kingdoms which nearly exterminated the buffalo, then the Gilded Industrial Age barons, and now in the climate-disasters arising from a fossil fuel-based economy.

What is most important in the *Voyage of the Mayflower* is who is *not* written about. First, the indigenous people of North America, who were not just exposed to the diseases of Europe, often characterized in American classrooms

as an unfortunate accident, but to the violent superiority-complexes of the Old World. The military precision with which colonists exterminated Native peoples again is echoed in the military extermination of the buffalo by veterans of the genocidal campaigns against Native Americans (scalps of Native men, women, and children were hunted and sold as buffalo pelts would be later). Second, the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth 1620, a year after the first slave ship landed in Virginia. This trade, in which American merchants brutally stripped West Africa of people and resources, is a continuation of the European colonial practices which settled the US (Europeans were also active in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade). Any history of the Pilgrims and their ideals which does not include the consequences of those ideals is not a history, but a revision.

Thus, *Voyage of the Mayflower* follows the cataclysmic journey of the Puritans as they sought a new land to practice their revolutionary ideals: ideals of free religion and commerce. These ideals would shape the character of the young nation, one of dreamers and opportunists. The setting of Wolrich's text, full of quotes from the Pilgrims themselves, is in its original five sections centred on two main themes: the Ocean and the Ideals. The first, third, and final sections detail the journey, from setting out to stormy seas to reflections after landing. These are characterized by expanding and contracting harmonies, mirroring the rise and fall of the seas. The second and fourth sections outline the ideals of the passengers: their high ideals and, in the fourth section, those ideals put into practice in the Mayflower Compact, the Pilgrims' founding document for self-governance. At the heart of these movements is the one book of music the Pilgrims brought with them: the Ainsworth Psalter. The fourth movement is a collage of hymn tunes taken from the Psalter (Psalms 24, 49, 100, & 139). As the Puritans banned instruments (they were likely none bar a trumpet on the Mayflower itself) and choral singing in worship except for singing of the Psalms, the Ainsworth Psalter is the primary musical identity of the Pilgrims (though the merchants likely had their own secular musical tastes). Regardless of how one appraises the impact of the Colonists, it is important to understand their perspective and their hardships and triumphs, though one must not do so in a vacuum from the consequences. This is the story of the Pilgrims, as told by them, in their words.

© 2021 Jon Paul Mayse

* * *

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Serenade in D Major for Flute, Violin and Viola, op. 25 (1801)

Beethoven moved to Vienna in 1792, “the year after Mozart’s death, to study with Haydn and establish a name for himself as a serious composer”¹. Whilst the majority of his composition at that time focused on works for piano and traditional instrument groupings, “he also experimented with unconventional combinations”².

His Op.25 *Serenade*, most likely written between 1801 and 1802, is one of Beethoven’s most unique chamber works, combining flute, violin and viola. Similar to his Op.20 septet, it “gained considerable popular appeal which provided much-needed income for the (then) young Beethoven”³. Written as outdoor music to “indulge the Viennese society-at-play, this airy and charming work features the Beethoven at his most ‘recreational’”⁴.

As with Mozart’s own *Serenades*, Beethoven “introduces this somewhat eclectic approach to instrumentation with an *Entrata*. An Italian variant of the Spanish word “*entrada*”, it presents as a festive or march-like prelude, originally used for the entrance of the performing musicians in a procession”⁵. The horn-like fanfares of the flute “serve as an invitation for the strings to join the ‘conversation’ and for the light-hearted mood to begin”⁶. The *Gallant* features a flute solo with mandolin-like accompaniment from the strings, followed by a short set of variations that “affords each instrument an opportunity to shine, each with their own solo part”⁷. A rustic dance, “replete with Scotch ‘snap’ rhythms”⁸, concludes the work.

1-2, 4-8 © Turner, 2012

3. © Hertz, 2008

* * *

Peter Warlock (1894-1930)

Text by W.B. Yeats (1865-1939)

The Curlew (1920-22)

Philip Arnold Heseltine, better known by the pseudonym Peter Warlock, was “a radical, often scandalous, gentleman whose fascination with the occult was equally matched by his interest and skill in writing music”¹. The originality of

Warlock's music "secured him popularity within the development of British music in the early 20th-century"² and despite only living until the age of 36, much of his music remains as popular today as it was during his lifetime. The piece for which he "remains synonymous is the exquisitely beautiful and atmospheric symphonic poem, *The Curlew*; the work which even Warlock himself believed was one of his best"³.

Written between 1916 and 1922, for tenor, string quartet, flute and cor anglais, the work employs four poems by W. B. Yeats. Yeats "held a certain disdain for his work being set to music, and denied Warlock the permission to publish *The Curlew*, however Warlock's imaginative setting of the poems won him recognition from the Carnegie Trust who immediately published the work"⁴.

The Curlew conjures a melancholic and disconsolate mood, perfectly reflecting Yeats' poetry. Warlock creates "a haunting sense of regret which permeates the work as a whole, expertly crafting an unsettled and stark bleakness, evoking the barren uplands where curlews are often found; and the mid-Wales setting, surrounded by curlews, that he found himself living in at the time of writing this work"⁵. The work also delves into Warlock's "love of magic, evoking witches, flying swans, and calls of the peewits"⁶.

1-6. © Campbell, 2020

SATURDAY 17 JULY 3pm & 7.30pm

County Assembly Rooms, Lincoln



YOANNA PRODANOVA (tenor)

ALISSA FIRSOVA (piano)

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Suite Italienne (from *Pulcinella*) for Cello and Piano (1932–33)

DMITRI SMIRNOV

Tiriel for Cello and Piano, Op. 41c (1983)

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Sonata for Cello and Piano in G minor, Op. 19 (1901)

* * *

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Suite Italienne (from *Pulcinella*) (1932-33)

At the end of the Great War Igor Stravinsky “pursued a radical shift in his compositional approach, techniques and aims”¹. There was a “purging of the larger-scale orchestras that were the cornerstone of his pre-War ballets *Firebird* and *Petrushka*, and a re-consideration of the dense chord structures and revolutionary rhythmic features that brought him international critical attention, most notably via the Paris stage where *Rite of Spring* had premiered a few years before”².

Stravinsky’s new *neoclassical* style featured “leaner ensembles, more transparent textures, astringent harmonies, and a new interest and found respect for music of the past, qualities perfectly reflected in his ballet *Pulcinella*, which premiered in May 1920 at the Paris Opera”³. With a cast of characters drawn from *commedia dell’ arte*, and music largely based on the scores of Neapolitan composer Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736), *Pulcinella* soon became one of the composer’s most popular works, spawning a host of arrangements. These include his *Suite Italienne*, which Stravinsky assembled in collaboration with cellist Gregor Piatagorsky in 1932.

In arranging the music of Pergolesi and his contemporaries, Stravinsky “sought painstakingly to preserve the clear phrasing, cadential patterns and decadent, ornamental trills of the Baroque Neapolitan style”⁴. However, he also sought to pepper the score “with jagged accents on weak notes of the bar, while disrupting the harmonic flow by means of exaggerated passing notes in the bass—a crafty way of maximising sonic resonance without unduly thickening the texture”⁵.

The suite begins with the ballet’s overture, *Introduzione*. “Clearly audible, even

in this chamber version, is the Baroque *ritornello* style of the original orchestral scoring, with alternating sections played by the whole orchestra (*ripieni*) and a small group of soloists (*concertino*)⁶. The following *Serenata* derives from the *canzonetta*, *Mentre l'erbetta pascel'agnella* (While the little lamb grazes), from Pergolesi's opera *Il Flaminio* (1735). The "gentle lilt of its dotted rhythm identifies as a *sicilienne*, a pastoral tranquility is tinged with a hint of melancholy"⁷. However, the mood is lifted in the *Tarantella*, with its undeniable energy, pace, and sustained use of the cello's high register. The *Minuetto e finale* is, arguably, "one of the great musical transformation scenes in Stravinsky's canon"⁸. Opening in an elegiac mood, it builds incrementally, finally "exploding in an exuberant fanfare of excitement in true eighteenth-century comic opera style"⁹. As the work concludes, the listener is happily reunited with the simple melodic phrase from the overture.

I-9. © Vancouver Recital Society, 2014

* * *

Dimitry Smirnov (1948-2020)

Tiriël for cello and piano Op. 41c (1985/2019)

The opera *Tiriël* op. 41, after William Blake's first prophetic poem, was written by Dmitry N. Smirnov in 1985 in Moscow, and staged in 1989 in Freiburg, Germany. This is a dark apocalyptic parable, where action occurs at the dawn of human history.

The old blind Tiriël, a former tyrant removed from power and filled with the thirst for revenge, sends devastating, malicious curses to all destined to cross his path—to his sons, daughters, brothers, dear old parents Har and Heva, and, finally, to himself, and by this he brings death to all humanity. In the epilogue of the opera, the goddess Mnetha sings a lullaby to mankind, which had already passed away, saying that the evil, which led to this catastrophe, is inherent in human nature itself.

The symphonic prologue to the opera is based on the motifs of this lullaby. The author's transcription of the prologue, *Tiriël* Op. 41c for cello and piano, has long been included in the repertoire of quite a few distinguished cellists.

© 2021 Alissa Firsova

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Sonata for Cello and Piano in G minor Op. 19 (1901)

Rachmaninoff's music "is synonymous with a notable lushness of scoring"¹, and the keyboard writing in this chamber work for cello and piano is no exception. Written in 1901, around the same time as his famous Piano Concerto No. 2, it is "impressive in its expressive range and orchestral heft of sonority"². Many of its themes "bear the stylistic imprint of Orthodox hymns; especially in their use of close intervals, obsessive repetition of single notes, and bell-like sonorities"³.

Its inherent technical demands, for both cellist and pianist, are famously challenging, but with "spectacular effect, equal to his larger works such as the concertos, or major works for piano solo"⁴. The first movement begins with a slow introduction that features much of the thematic material then pursued in the following *Allegro moderato*. Of special note is the rising semitone, placed in the cello's mid-range, that is stated in the opening phrases. This repeated motive "pervades the themes of the exposition and drives the momentum of the stormy development section, which merges into the recapitulation at its climactic point of highest tension, as in the first movement of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto"⁵.

The second movement *Allegro scherzando* is remarkable in its "stark yet emotional volatility"⁶. It begins with uncanny reference to Schubert's *Erkönig*, but "lyrical impulses soon begin to emerge, creating a duet of simple, yet sentimental charm"⁷. The third movement, an *Andante*, is arguably the shining light of this sonata: favouring an "harmonic ambivalence between major and minor keys, and a bittersweet, exotic sonic wrapping for the bell-like repeated notes of its opening phrase"⁸. Dark and brooding, the long phrases of this elegiac movement build up to an "impassioned climax before ebbing into a consoling calm of warm contentment"⁹.

The *Allegro mosso* finale in G major is a sonata-form movement of "vivid contrasts, featuring an exuberant opening theme, and a second theme that serves as a wistful anthem of a second theme, yielding at times to the type of fervent military rhythmic motif, a regular feature in Rachmaninoff's finales"¹⁰.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

ALISSA FIRSOVA

Since winning the BBC Proms Young Composer competition in 2001, Alissa Firsova received three world premieres at the Proms: her Bach Allegro was played by the RPO in 2010, her Bergen's Bonfire Op. 31 featured in the Bergen Philharmonic's 250th Anniversary Prom in 2015 and her Red Fox Op. 43 was performed by the National Youth Choir of Great Britain and Southbank Sinfonia in 2019. Her music has also been performed by Imogen Cooper, the Dante Quartet, Netherlands Blazer Ensemble, Seattle Chamber Players, English Chamber Orchestra, Camerata RCO (members of the Concertgebouw) and the Britten Sinfonia, among others. Alissa was recently invited to Verbier, Asiago, Canisy and Conques Festivals as pianist/composer-in-residence. Her music was recorded by Henning Kraggerud on the Simax label in his Munch Suite disc, and The Sixteen recorded her "Stabat Mater Op. 30" for the Coro label, which was featured in Gramophone's "Top 10 Compositions by Women".

As a pianist she gave her Wigmore Hall and Proms debuts in 2009, has performed in numerous prominent venues and festivals since, and released her debut CD, Russian Émigrés, for the Vivat label in 2015. She has enjoyed collaborations with distinguished artists such as Stephen Kovacevich, Stephen Isserlis, Roman Simovic, Julius Berger, Tim Hugh, Andrew Marriner and Daniel Rowland. Alissa enjoyed a 'triple'-debut with the English Chamber Orchestra as director, composer and conductor at the Cadogan Hall in 2013. She also conducted the Camerata RCO in her Le Soleil de Conques op. 33 in Conques Festival in 2015 and for the Union Musicale series in Turin in 2016.

Alissa's composer portrait CD, "Firsova Fantasy", which includes her string quartet, *Tennyson Fantasy* Op. 36, recorded by the Tippett Quartet, was awarded Gramophone's "CD of the Month" in Sept 2018. She received a UK premiere of her Die Windsbraut Op. 38 by the BBC Philharmonic under Leo McFall in Sept 2018, which was broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and subsequently received its Scottish premiere in March 2020 with the BBCSSO, under Mark Wigglesworth. She was also invited to give a solo piano recital for the Amsterdam Piano Series at the Concertgebouw in Oct 2018, which included her transcription of Mahler's *Adagietto* and was released on vinyl by Gutman Records in Feb 2021.

Exciting events in the 18/19 season included a US tour with the Camerata RCO and concerts in Paris, Geneva, Munich, Prague, Bratislava, the Luberon and

London. Since July 2019 she became the Artistic Director of the Lincolnshire International Chamber Music Festival. 2020 opened with an all-Beethoven programme conducted and played by Alissa, with the Cheltenham Chamber Orchestra, a concert with Camerata RCO in Amsterdam's Muziekgebouw, including her *Lieder der Welt* Op. 44 on Hofmannsthal poetry, and a Schubert and Britten song recital together with tenor, Mark Padmore in Lincoln to launch the LICMF 2020 Festival, which sadly could not take place due to the Covid-pandemic.

Future plans include a residency at the Stift Festival in Holland in Aug, where Alissa will conduct the world premiere of her mother's violin concerto and will perform music by Rachmaninov and her family, including the world premiere of her own *Lilacs* Op. 47. In October, Alissa will perform the Brahms Clarinet Trio together with a world premiere of her own clarinet trio with the Camerata RCO at the City Proms Festival in Holland. In March 2022, she will again conduct the Cheltenham Chamber Orchestra. The Britten Sinfonia will give a world premiere of her composition for trumpet and strings in April and the Oxford Bach Choir will give a world premiere of her *To Spring* with the BBC Orchestra of Wales in June.

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MARK PADMORE

Artist-in-Residence

Mark Padmore was born in London and studied at King's College, Cambridge. He has established an international career in opera, concert and recital. His appearances in Bach Passions have gained particular notice, especially his renowned performances as Evangelist in the St Matthew and St John Passions with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Sir Simon Rattle, staged by Peter Sellars.

In opera Mark has worked with directors Peter Brook, Katie Mitchell, Mark Morris and Deborah Warner. Work has included the leading roles in Harrison Birtwistle *The Corridor* and *The Cure* at the Aldeburgh Festival and Linbury Theatre, Covent Garden; Captain Vere in Britten *Billy Budd* and Evangelist in a staging of *St Matthew Passion* both for Glyndebourne Festival Opera; Third Angel/John in George Benjamin *Written on Skin* with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden and the world premiere of Tansy Davies *Cave* with the London Sinfonietta. Most recently, he appeared in a new ROH production of Britten's

Death in Venice, where his performance was described as a “tour de force” and “exquisite of voice, [presenting] Aschenbach’s physical and spiritual breakdown with extraordinary detail and insight”

In concert Mark performs with the world’s leading orchestras. He was Artist in Residence for the 2017-18 Season with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and held a similar position with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra for 2016-17. His work with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment has involved projects exploring both Bach St John and St Matthew Passions and has attracted worldwide acclaim.

Mark gives recitals worldwide. He has performed all three Schubert song cycles in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Birmingham, London, Liverpool, Paris, Tokyo, Vienna and New York. Regular recital partners include Kristian Bezuidenhout, Jonathan Biss, Imogen Cooper, Julius Drake, Till Fellner, Simon Lepper, Paul Lewis, Roger Vignoles and Andrew West. Composers who have written for him include Sally Beamish, Harrison Birtwistle, Jonathan Dove, Thomas Larcher, Nico Muhly, Alec Roth, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Huw Watkins and Ryan Wigglesworth.

His extensive discography includes: Beethoven *Missa Solemnis* and Haydn *Die Schöpfung* with Bernard Haitink and Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra on BR Klassik and lieder by Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart with Kristian Bezuidenhout for Harmonia Mundi. Other Harmonia Mundi recordings; Schubert cycles with Paul Lewis (*Winterreise* won the 2010 Gramophone magazine Vocal Award); Schumann *Dichterliebe* with Kristian Bezuidenhout (2011 Edison Klassiek Award) and Britten *Serenade*, *Nocturne* and Finzi *Dies Natalis* with the Britten Sinfonia (ECHO/Klassik 2013 award).

Mark was voted 2016 Vocalist of the Year by Musical America and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Kent University in 2014. He was appointed CBE in the 2019 Queens’ Birthday Honours List.

Mark is Artistic Director of the St. Endellion Summer Music Festival in Cornwall.

* * *

MORGAN SZYMANSKI

Described as ‘a player destined for future glories’ (Classical Guitar Magazine) Morgan Szymanski has been highlighted as ‘One to Watch’ by both Gramophone Magazine and the BBC Music Magazine. A featured artist on the cover of

Classical Guitar Magazine, Morgan Szymanski was selected as a finalist for the 'Outstanding Young Artist Award' by MIDEM Classique/IAMA.

Born in Mexico City in 1979, Morgan Szymanski started playing the guitar at the age of six. Early studies at the National Music School (Mexico) and the Edinburgh Music School led to a scholarship to study under Carlos Bonell and Gary Ryan at the Royal College of Music (RCM) in London, graduating in 2004 with first class honours. During his studies he won guitar prizes at the RCM as well as being awarded scholarships from the Tillett Trust, Countess of Munster Musical Trust, Leverhulme Trust, Wall Trust, FONCA and a scholarship to study at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam. He went on to become the first solo guitarist to be selected by the Young Classical Artist Trust and was awarded a Junior Fellowship at the RCM, where he completed his Master's degree with distinction.

A top prize-winner at international competitions, Morgan won first prize at the National Guitar Competition in Mexico. Performances as a soloist and with orchestras have taken him to concert halls and festivals in Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bermuda, China, Chile, France, Germany, Guatemala, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Macedonia, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Scotland, USA, South Africa and Zimbabwe. He is included in the Mexican Foreign Office publication "El Mundo en las Manos" for his contribution as an ambassador of music and Mexican culture overseas.

In recent years Morgan has given recitals at major UK venues and festivals including the Wigmore Hall, Cadogan Hall, Bridgewater Hall, Purcell Room, Queen Elizabeth Hall, King's Place, The Sage Gateshead, Royal Opera House, and London International Guitar Festival. He has appeared as a soloist with orchestras such as the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México, Orchestra of the Swan, Southbank Sinfonia, Welsh Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Sinfonia, RTÉ Concert Orchestra, the Cervantes Choir and the Coro de Madrigalistas de Bellas Artes in Mexico's Palacio de Bellas Artes.

Morgan is a resident artist at Beaminster Festival in Dorset, of which Sir Neville Marriner was patron.

Morgan continues to build his international reputation with performances around the world, most recently including performances at the Shanghai Oriental Arts Centre, Queens Hall (Edinburgh), Luxembourg Philharmonie, National Concert Hall (Dublin), Vienna Konzerthaus, Festival de México and Festival Cervantino.

In 2018 he toured South Africa with guitarist James Grace.

Morgan can be heard frequently on BBC Radio 3 and broadcast Alec Roth's Concerto with the Britten Sinfonia and Mark Padmore live. He recorded Alejandro Basulto's guitar concerto 'Jig Variations' with the Shakespeare Sinfonia for Toccata Classics in a recording celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Anglo-Mexican Foundation. He also performed Frida Kahlo's only known song with Lizzie Ball at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. His recordings on Sarabande Records have been described as "top class in every respect" and as "a jewel" by Gramophone Magazine. Of Szymanski's "Sketches of Mexico", Gramophone Magazine wrote "a gorgeous and original tribute to Szymanski's homeland, its artists and its music" with Morgan's playing "of the highest order". He has recorded the works of Alec Roth for the Signum label with tenor Mark Padmore. His latest recording, "El Arbol de la Vida" was supported by the Mexican Arts Council and includes nine world premieres written especially for him.

Morgan's devotion to chamber music has led to collaborations with singers Dame Ann Murray and Mark Padmore, guitarists John Williams, Carlos Bonell and Celso Machado, Alison Balsom (trumpet), Harriet Mackenzie and Lizzie Ball (violin), Marcelo Nisinman (bandoneon), Adam Walker and Alejandro Escuer (flute) and the Sacconi, Doric, Amici, Carducci, Cremona, Carlos Chávez and Odeion Quartets.

Numerous composers have dedicated works for Morgan including, Michael Nyman, Alec Roth, Stephen McNeff, Simon Rowland-Jones, Simone Iannarelli, Deborah Pritchard, Paul Coles, Ivan Moseley, Marcela Rodríguez and Julio César Oliva.

He is an alumnus of Live Music Now!, the scheme started by Lord Yehudi Menuhin to reach audiences that would otherwise have no access to live music. In 2016 he founded PRISMA, an artistic outreach programme aimed at taking workshops in music and the performing arts to socially disadvantaged and remote areas in Mexico. This project has benefitted over 16,000 Mexican children.

Morgan is much in demand as a teacher and has given masterclasses at top conservatoires worldwide including the Royal College of Music, Royal Welsh College of Music (Cardiff) and Trinity College of Music as well as conservatoires in China and Mexico.

Morgan Szymanski plays on a guitar by the Italian luthier Luciano Lovadina.

NAVARRA STRING QUARTET

“The players realize the music’s essential intensity with their vivid sense of dramatic expression in an intensely detailed performance.” *BBC Music Magazine, September 2009*

Commended for poetic lyricism, haunting intensity and stylistic understanding, the British based Navarra String Quartet distinguishes itself as one of the leading ensembles of its generation. Taking its name from a bottle of red from the wine region famously known for its multi-coloured landscapes, the Quartet’s diverse cultural backgrounds are united in serving the music with relentless passion and commitment.

Highlights of the 19/20 season include debut appearances at the Lincoln Center New York, the Heidelberg String Quartet Festival and the Stavanger Chamber Music Festival. Following a concert in Latvia for the anniversary concert of Peteris Vasks, the Quartet is pleased to return to the Wigmore Hall and the Peasmarsh Chamber Music Festival. Previous appearances at major venues throughout the world include the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Luxembourg Philharmonie, Berlin Konzerthaus, Sydney Opera House and international festivals such as Aix-en-Provence, Grachten, Schwetzingen, Rheingau, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and the BBC Proms. It has also toured extensively to Russia, the USA, China, South Korea and the Middle East.

NSQ enjoys sharing the stage with a variety of partners such as Tom Poster, Mark Simpson, Francesco Piemontesi, Guy Johnston, Allan Clayton among others, and their friends the Castalian and Elias Quartets. Beyond the versatile repertoire from di Lasso to Kurtág, the quartet finds collaborating with contemporary composers highly nourishing. New commissions by Simon Rowland-Jones, Joseph Phibbs and Mauricio Hidalgo are dedicated to the Navarra Quartet and featured in eclectically crafted programmes along Beethoven and his contemporaries.

Highly-acclaimed recordings include Joseph Haydn’s *The Seven Last Words* for Altara Records and a disc of Peteris Vasks’ first three String Quartets for Challenge Records, which was recorded whilst working closely with the composer himself. The disc was described by critics as “stunning”, “sensational” and “compelling”, and was nominated for the prestigious German Schallplattenkritik Award.

Formed in 2002 at the Royal Northern College of Music, the members of

the young ensemble commenced their studies under the guidance of the late Dr. Christopher Rowland. Their development continued with intense studies in Cologne with the Alban Berg Quartet, Pro-Quartet in Paris, the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove as well as residencies at the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh and the Verbier Festival in Switzerland. Driven by the desire to explore new depths, the Quartet plays regularly to revered musicians such as Rainer Schmidt, Eberhard Feltz, Ferenc Rados and Gabor Takács-Nagy. They also enjoy teaching the next generation in masterclass and summer courses. NSQ was the Quartet in Residence at the Royal Northern College of Music and Associated Ensemble at the Birmingham Conservatoire.

Selected for representation by the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) in 2006, NSQ is winner of the MIDEM Classique Young Artist Award, a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship and top prizes at the Banff, Melbourne and Florence International String Quartet Competitions. In 2017, the prestigious Kersjes Prize in the Netherlands was awarded to NSQ, enabling the creation of many exciting and unique programmes.

The Quartet plays on a variety of fine instruments which include violins by Hieronymus (II) Amati, and Johannes Franciscus Cuypers, the latter generously on loan from the Nationaal Muziekinstrumenten Fonds in the Netherlands, a modern Capicchioni viola, and a Grancino cello made in Milan in 1698, generously on loan from the Cruft-Grancino Trust which is administered by the Royal Society of Musicians.

Since 2014, NSQ has been in charge of the artistic vision of the Weesp Chamber Music Festival, located in a charming historic city near Amsterdam.

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BRITTEN SINFONIA

In 1992, Britten Sinfonia was established as a bold reimagining of the conventional image of an orchestra. A flexible ensemble comprising the UK's leading soloists and chamber musicians came together with a unique vision: to collapse the boundaries between old and new music; to collaborate with composers, conductors and guest artists across the arts, focussing on the musicians rather than following the vision of a principal conductor; and to create involving, intelligent music events that both audiences and performers experience with an

unusual intensity.

The orchestra is named after Benjamin Britten, in part a homage to its chosen home of the East of England, where Britten's roots were also strong. But Britten Sinfonia also embodies its namesake's ethos. Its projects are illuminating and distinctive, characterised by their rich diversity of influences and artistic collaborators; and always underpinned by a commitment to uncompromising quality, whether the orchestra is performing in New York's Lincoln Center or in Lincolnshire's Crowland Abbey. Britten Sinfonia musicians are deeply rooted in the communities with which they work, with an underlying philosophy of finding ways to reach even the most excluded individuals and groups.

Today Britten Sinfonia is heralded as one of the world's leading ensembles and its philosophy of adventure and reinvention has inspired a new movement of emerging chamber groups. It is an Associate Ensemble at London's Barbican, Resident Orchestra at Saffron Hall in Essex, and has residencies in Norwich and Cambridge. It performs an annual chamber music series at London's Wigmore Hall and appears regularly at major UK festivals including the Aldeburgh, Brighton, Norfolk and Norwich Festivals and the BBC Proms. The orchestra has performed a live broadcast to more than a million people worldwide from the Sistine Chapel, and toured to the US, Asia and much of Europe. It is a BBC Radio 3 Broadcast Partner and has award-winning recordings on the Hyperion and Harmonia Mundi labels.

Recent and current collaborators include Keaton Henson and dancer/choreographer Pam Tanowitz, with commissions from Thomas Adès, Gerald Barry, Shiva Freshareki, Emily Howard, Brad Mehldau and Mark-Anthony Turnage. The orchestra was a commissioning partner in a ground-breaking partnership between minimalist composer Steve Reich and visual artist Gerhard Richter in a new work that was premiered in October 2019.

Outside the concert hall, Britten Sinfonia musicians work on creative and therapeutic projects with pre-school children, teenagers, young carers, people suffering from dementia, life-time prisoners and older people at risk of isolation. The orchestra's annual OPUS competition offers unpublished composers the chance to receive a professional commission and unearths new, original and exciting UK compositional talent. Members of Britten Sinfonia Academy, the orchestra's youth chamber ensemble for talented young performers, have performed in museums, improvised with laptop artists, led family workshops and appeared at Latitude Festival.

Britten Sinfonia Management Team

Meurig Bowen Chief Executive & Artistic Director

James Calver Concerts Director

Hazel Terry Concerts and Tours Manager

Daniel Regan Concerts Assistant

Hannah Bates Orchestra Personnel Manager

Rachel Wilkinson Creative Learning Manager

Elaine Rust Finance Manager

Alice Walton Communications Director

Nick Brealey Development Director

Milly March Marketing Manager

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YOANNA PRODANOVA

Cellist Yoanna Prodanova was born in 1992 in Varna, Bulgaria. She completed her studies in 2019 at the Royal Academy of Music in London where she was a Bicentenary Scholar on the prestigious Advanced Diploma course, already having obtained her Bachelor and Master's degrees at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Previously she studied in Varna and in Montreal where her family immigrated in 2006. Yoanna has performed concertos with the Royal Academy of Music Orchestra, the Amati Orchestra, the Surrey Philharmonic and the Guildford Symphony Orchestra among others. She regularly performs as a recitalist in the UK and Europe. In 2019 she gave her recital debut in Switzerland at the Studio Ernest Ansermet where she played the Swiss premiere of Valentin Gheorghiu's sonata for cello and piano with her duo partner Mihai Ritivoiu. This recital was broadcast live on RTS Espace 2.

Yoanna's debut album including works by Janacek, Fauré and Chopin with Mihai Ritivoiu was released in 2020 on the Linn Records label. She has also recorded the Brahms clarinet trio with Joseph Shiner and Somi Kim for Orchid Records.

Yoanna has been invited to festivals such as OCM Prussia Cove, Rencontres de violoncelle de Bélage in France, Siete Lagos Festival in Patagonia, St Magnus Festival in Orkney and the Lincolnshire Chamber Music Festival, and has collaborated with artists such as Andrew Marriner, Alissa Firsova, Ian Swensen,

Matt Hunt and the Doric String Quartet. Yoanna's awards include The Philip and Dorothy Green Award for Young Artists (2016), the Sylva Gelber Award (2017, 2018), Tunnell Trust Award (2019) and the First prize at the International Joachim Competition in Weimar with her string quartet, the Barbican Quartet.

Yoanna's most important cello mentors have been, in chronological order, Daniela Kirilova, Denis Brott, Louise Hopkins, Rebecca Gilliver, Richard Lester and Hannah Roberts. She is extremely grateful to the Canimex Group for the loan of a beautiful cello made by Giuseppe Gagliano in 1788.

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