

WIGMORE HALL 125

Friday 10 April 2026
7.30pm

Jack Sheen conductor

Eleonore Cockerham soprano

Darragh Morgan violin

Birmingham Contemporary Music Group

Tony Robb flute

Helen Benson flute

Melinda Maxwell oboe, cor anglais

Adam Slater clarinet, bass clarinet

Julian Warburton percussion

Richard Allen harp

John Reid piano, harpsichord

Richard Thomas violin

Ralf Ehlers viola

Tim Gill cello

Phoebe Cheng double bass

Salvatore Sciarrino (b.1947)
& Carlo Gesualdo (c.1561-1613)

Le voci sottovetro for voice and chamber ensemble (1998)
*I. Gagliarda del Principe di Venosa • II. Tu m'uccidi, o
Crudele • III. Canzon francese del Principe • IV. Moro, Lasso*

Jack Sheen (b.1993)

Television Continuity Poses for solo violin and chamber
ensemble (2016, rev. 2020)
One • Two • Three • Four

Rebecca Saunders (b.1967)

Stirrings (2011)

Interval

Salvatore Sciarrino

Aspern Suite for soprano and ensemble (1979)
*I. Ouvertura. Tema • II. Aria 'Aprite un po' quegli occhi' •
III. Canzonetta 'Deh vieni non tardar' • IV. Canzone rituale •
V. Passeggiata • VI. Continua la passeggiata – Tramonto •
VII. Aria 'Non più andrai farfallone amoroso' • VIII. Notturmo
– Arietta 'Non so più cosa son cosa faccio' – Intermezzo –
Finale*



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In Henry James's 1886 novella *The Aspern Papers*, a nameless narrator travels to Venice in search of Juliana Bordereau, an old lover of the deceased American poet Jeffrey Aspern. His true search is for Aspern's papers, letters and other personal documents that will help his scholarly ambition to create a complete image of the revered writer. Bordereau denies the existence of such papers, and keeps the narrator at a distance. The story has two climaxes: Bordereau's discovery of the narrator about to rummage through her desk, so shocking that she collapses and later dies from the incident. The second is the revelation some time later that Aspern's documents not only existed, but Bordereau's niece has burned them all, one by one.

Although in no way a telling of James's story, **Sciarrino's** *Aspern Suite* – and perhaps the composer's entire oeuvre – is defined by an aura of secrecy. Sounds are veiled, half spoken, fluttering in and out of earshot. The music in tonight's programme feels private, the musicians acting out discreet rituals which the audience observes from afar. The boundary between silence and sound is a fertile ground from which all four works flourish.

Le voci sottovetro – 'Voices Under Glass' – suggests both preservation and separation, music carefully displayed yet unreachable. The music in this case is not by Sciarrino, but Carlo Gesualdo, the 16th-century Italian nobleman, composer and murderer. Fragments of Gesualdo's sublime madrigals and lesser known instrumental works are – in Sciarrino's words – 'elaborated' upon, rendered here in Sciarrino's signature timbral palette. The instruments as well as the voice are placed under acoustic glass, their sounds bent, refracted, and tinted through an array of harmonics, breath-tones and glints of percussion. Without altering the works' ever-twisting and yearning notes, Sciarrino's reworking allows Gesualdo's music to uncannily straddle five centuries of Western culture, the delicacy of the instrumental sounds emphasising the composer's reverence for this precious historic source material.

Television Continuity Poses – my own four-movement work for solo violin and ensemble – continues this rhetoric of withholding. The piece captures and interrogates snippets of music, turning them over and spinning them around in lieu of allowing them to develop linearly. The violin's strings are detuned and

heavily muted, the player instructed to perform with exaggerated light, long bow strokes. The resulting faint sound is visually disconnected from the amount of energy exerted on stage, as if the music is happening much further away, gently stumbling about as the ensemble revolves around the soloist. The cyclic layers of music pose on stage, attempting to be static, but betrayed by the hum of their hyperactivity

A similarly mobile-like form holds the fragile, dusty sounds of **Rebecca Saunders's** *Stirrings*. This time the mobile extends over the entire hall, with the ensemble dispersed around the space, 'seeking a dialogue with the surrounding architecture and acoustic'. *Pianissimo* lines teeter on the edges of perception, so soft that the impurities of classical instrumental sound are magnified to the foreground: the hiss of breath, the whirring of metal and the grain of the bow hairs all become the protagonists of music that glows in our periphery.

The programme concludes with **Sciarrino's** *Aspern Suite*, more of an illusory collage of the composer's possible influences than a condensed version of his 1979 opera *Aspern*. The piece is explicitly non-narrative. The connections with James's story are atmospheric and thematic. The meaning of the piece is hidden somewhere in the rustling debris of other musical and literary sources contained in the *Suite*, including fragments from the opera *Aspern* alongside pointillistic settings of Da Ponte's libretto for *Le Nozze di Figaro* and folk song. The connections between them are associative: they sound more like hazy memories than a logical construction, haunting the composition as hollowed-out wisps and scurrying wraiths. At the heart of the *Suite*, when we are at our most lost in its misty alleyways, a Venetian gondola song floats by somewhere on a nearby canal, the soprano's voice suspending on limping whistle-tones and harmonics.

For me, the meaning of the piece is stated at the end of the work's *Overture*, spoken by the soprano: 'strange, certainly, beyond all strangeness... that in tracing traces upon traces... we had come across ghosts and dust... echoes of echoes.' The facts of the *Suite* may remain as mysterious as Aspern's papers, but one's experience of the music is all the richer for it.

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Salvatore Sciarrino (b.1947)
& Carlo Gesualdo (c.1561-1613)

Le voci sottovetro for voice and chamber ensemble (1998)

I. Gagliarda del Principe di Venosa

II. Tu m'uccidi, o Crudele <i>Anonymous</i>	You kill me, you cruel one,
Tu m'uccidi, o crudele, E vuoi ch'io taccia E'l mio morir non grida? Ahi, Morire Ond'io ne vo gridando,	You kill me, you cruel one, and you want me to fall quiet and not cry out my death? Alas, death which makes me cry out,

III. Canzon francese del Principe

IV. Moro, Lasso <i>Anonymous</i>	I die, alas
Moro, lasso, al mio duolo, E chi può dar mi vita, Ahi, che m'ancide e non vuol darmi aita! O dolorosa sorte, Chi dar vita mi può, Ahi, mi dà morte!	I die, alas, in my suffering, and she who could give me life, alas, kills me and will not help me. O sorrowful fate, she who could give me life, alas, gives me death!

Jack Sheen (b.1993)

Television Continuity Poses for solo violin and chamber ensemble (2016, rev. 2020)

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Interval

Salvatore Sciarrino

Aspern Suite for soprano and ensemble (1979)

Given the nature of the original text, some of the following translations aim only to give a general sense of the words and are not intended to serve as accurate translations.

I. Ouverture. Tema

Strano, certamente, oltre ogni stranezza che nell'insegnire tracce su tracce ci facciamo imbattuti in fantasmi e polvere, fantasmi e polvere, meri echi di echi	Strange, certainly, beyond all strangeness that in tracing traces upon traces we had come across ghosts and dust, the mere echoes of echoes
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II. Aria 'Aprite un po' quegli occhi' <i>Lorenzo Da Ponte</i>	Aria 'Just open your eyes'
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Aprite un po' quegli occhi Uomini incauti e sciocchi, Guardate queste femmine, Guardate Guardate Guardate cosa son. Queste chiamate dee	Just open your eyes you rash and foolish men. And look at these women: look, look see them as they are these goddesses, so called
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Son rose spinose Son volpi vezzose; Son orse benigne Colombe maligne Maestre d'inganni Amiche d'affanni Che fingono mentono Amore non senton, Non senton pietà, Il resto no dico, Già ognuno lo sa.	They are thorned roses, alluring vixens smiling she-bears, malign doves, masters of deceit friends of distress who cheat and lie, who feel no love and have no pity. The rest I need not say for everyone knows it already.
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III. Canzonetta 'Deh vieni non tardar'

Lorenzo Da Ponte

Deh, vieni, non tardar,
O gioia bella
Vieni ove amore
Per goder t'appella,
Finché non splende in ciel
notturna face,
Finché l'aria è ancor bruna e
il mondo tace.

Vieni, ben mio, tra queste
piante ascose,
Ti vo' la fronte incoronar di
rose.

IV. Canzone rituale

Lorenzo Da Ponte

Civette che allettano
Per trarci le
Comete che brillano
Per toglierci il lume
Comete civette

V. Passeggiata

-rbo v'a vè molto ingenà.
Proveme solo un
-rò lasseme pur in pa me
con me provè pres

tuto el rispetto co vupo
belviseto
anzi cautoan darò
Co vupo belviseto anzi cauto
andarò.
Perchè forse m'entrè, forse
v'incontrarè
quel che no pensè
mai
co m'impossesa
rò.

Canzonetta 'Oh come, do not be late'

Oh come, do not be late,
my beloved,
come where love
calls you to pleasure
until the night sky no
longer glows,
while the world is still
dark and silent.

Come, dear, among these
hidden trees,
I want to crown your head
with roses.

Ritual song

Coquettes who entice
only to pluck our...
Comets who shine
only to take away our light;
coquette-comets

Wait, [he/she] is very naive
Just try me once...
No, leave me in peace; don't
try me anymore.

With all due respect to
your beautiful face,
I will proceed with caution.
I will be careful with your
beautiful face.
For perhaps I will enter,
perhaps I will find in you
that which you never
imagined,
once I take possession [of
your heart].

Voreu bezzio
regali?
Sarè presto obedia no digo
una busia
nissun mi so inganar
no digo una busia nissun mi
so ingarnar;
nè voi altro da vue
gnanca un fia de
più
che sole parolete
ma in casa vogio
entrar

E se non ve fidessi
da più de sie
informeve in questo
sodisfeve
che vol za la
rason
in questo so disfeve che vol
za la rason
E co v'informarè
gnente
più che me lassè qua
abasso,
feme dessu paron no me
lassè qua abasso feme
dessu paron.

No stè a lassar sta sorte,
deve del bon coragio
e non a bie travaglio
che nove pentirè,
che nove pentirè
forse poda
radar,
secondo il vostro far,
secondo il vostro far,
che un dì anca mi
vesposa
e mia mugier vu sié
e mia mugier vu sié.

Do you want kisses and
gifts?
I will soon be obeyed, I'm
not lying,
no one can deceive me,
I'm not lying, no one can
deceive me;
nor do I want anything
else from you, not even
a tiny bit more
than just a few little words,
but I want to enter the
house,

And if you do not trust me,
more than six times,
inform yourselves in
this satisfaction
that reason already
demands;
in this satisfaction that
reason already demands.
And when you have
informed yourselves,
nothing more than
leaving me here below,
make me the master
above, do not leave me
here below;

Do not let your spirits fall,
you must be brave and
not despair
for you will not repent it,
for you will not repent it;
perhaps things may
change,
according to your conduct,
according to your
conduct, so that one
day I may marry you
and you shall be my wife,
and you shall be my wife.

VI. Continua la passeggiata – Tramonto

Sento chel aior me manca averte da lassar e a fato abandoner benchè incostante;	I feel the air failing me, having to leave you, and forced to abandon you, though [my heart is] fickle;
moro da la passion che mai sarà de mi pri vorestar de ti fra pene tante	I am dying of a passion– what will ever become of me? To remain far from you amidst such suffering.
Soto altro cielo oh Dio fra poco miho da andar chi m’a da consolar instagnan pena? Avanti de partir vo ra ve morir gua; un orno sconsolà starò in caena	Under another sky, oh God, I must soon go; Who is there to console me in this constant pain? Before departing, I wish I could die right here; a disconsolate man, I shall remain in chains.
L’è una gran fiera sorte e barbaro destin; ah, povaro Tonin che sarà mai? Sordo el ciel è per mi che no’l me ascolta un fia; la stela mia infurià per mazor guai.	It is a cruel fate and a barbarous destiny; ah, poor Tonin, what will happen? Heaven is deaf to me, it does not listen to me even a little; my star is enraged, bringing me even greater woes.

VII. Aria ‘Non più andrai farfallone amoroso’

Lorenzo Da Ponte

Aria ‘No more will you, amorous butterfly’

Non più andrai farfallone amoroso Notte e giorno d’intorno girando; Delle belle turbando il riposo Narcisetto, Adoncino d’amor.	No more will you, amorous butterfly, flit around the castle night and day, upsetting all the pretty girls love’s little Narcissus and Adonis.
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VIII. Notturmo – Arietta ‘Non so più cosa son cosa faccio’ –

Intermezzo – Finale

Lorenzo Da Ponte

Arietta ‘I no longer know what I am, what I do’

Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio, or di foco, ora sono di ghiaccio, ogni donna cangiar di colore, ogni donna mi fa palpitar.	I no longer know what I am, what I do; now I’m all fire, now all ice, every woman changes my temperature, every woman makes my heart beat faster.
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