

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 12 November 2022
11.30am

Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective

Karim Sulayman tenor
Adam Walker flute
Annemarie Federle horn
Elena Urioste violin
Melissa White violin
Rosalind Ventriss viola
Laura van der Heijden cello
Tom Poster piano

Mel Bonis (1858-1937)

Scènes de la forêt (1927-8)
Nocturne • A l'aube • Invocation • Pour Artémis

Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

Le jeune pâtre breton (1833)

Philippe Gaubert (1879-1941)

Soir Païen (1908)

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Une flûte invisible (1885)

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Piano Quintet No. 1 in D minor Op. 89 (1887-1905)
I. Molto moderato • II. Adagio • III. Allegretto moderato



This concert is part of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust ticket scheme, offering free tickets to those aged 8-25

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30

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In its first concert today, Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective offers a range of lesser-known music by French composers, spanning a period from the first half of the 19th Century to the 1920s. All the works display a typically French delight in richly sensual tone colours and compelling melodies, and those in the first half offer resonant musical imaginings of the pastoral.

The concert opens with a four-movement chamber work by the little-known, although very prolific, composer **Mel Bonis**. This was the pseudonym used by Mélanie Hélène Bonis (1858-1937), a deeply religious woman who led a life that was both decidedly conventional and emphatically dramatic. She was forbidden by her family to marry the singer and poet, Amédée Hettich, with whom she had fallen passionately in love, or to continue her successful musical studies at the Paris Conservatoire where she had impressed leading French figures such as César Franck. Forced into an arranged marriage, she led a constrained life as a dutiful wife and mother until renewing both her passionate relationship with Hettich and her musical composition. Working at a time when women were not expected to succeed as composers of anything other than light songs or piano pieces, Bonis left a substantial body of work which is slowly beginning to receive the recognition it deserves.

Scènes de la forêt for flute, horn and piano (1927-8) is a fairly late work which demonstrates Bonis's adept command of compellingly beautiful melodies and powerful harmonies. This substantial piece opens at night with a somewhat languorous *Nocturne* and then evokes a shimmering dawn in *A l'aube*, with calls to action from both horn and flute before settling into the beauty of the new day. This is followed by a brief, enchanting *Invocation* before the final movement *Pour Artémis*, a jaunty and rousing dedication to the goddess of hunting, with moments of quieter reflection.

The addition of another instrument to the expected pairing of voice and piano is one of the ways in which numerous composers have enriched their vocal music. 'Le jeune pâtre breton' by **Hector Berlioz** (1803-1869) was originally written in 1833 for voice and piano. Two years later, Berlioz added an optional horn part. This is a folk-like song in which the horn perfectly complements the soundworld of the Breton herdsman, singing to his beloved Anna as she tends her goats.

The composer and flautist **Philippe Gaubert** (1879-1941) is known to flautists everywhere for his elegant works for flute and his authoritative *Méthode complète* (1923), written together with his teacher Paul Taffanel. It comes as no surprise that Gaubert added a flute to his 1908 setting of Albert Samain's poem *Soir Païen*, evoking the god Pan and his panpipes in this vivid depiction of a pagan evening:

While a pure reed modulates a slow harmony,

Pan, down there, leaning on the hills, raises himself up
To see the nymphs dance barefoot on the bank...

Some years earlier, the esteemed composer **Camille Saint-Saëns** (1835-1921) had used a flute in his setting of Victor Hugo's *Une flûte invisible* (1885). As a young man, some 30 years previously, he had set the same poem – about three kinds of pastoral song: those of shepherds, birds and lovers – as the vocal duet 'Viens!' Whereas his earlier setting for two voices had focused on the lovers' song, the older Saint-Saëns chose to allow the 'invisible', sighing flute to dominate the later setting, to open and close this contemplative song.

The First Piano Quintet in D minor Op. 89 by **Gabriel Fauré** (1845-1924) is undeservedly much less well-known or frequently heard than his more popular works such as his numerous piano pieces, the ubiquitous *Requiem* or the Verlaine song cycle *La bonne chanson*. Like the *Requiem*, Fauré's First Piano Quintet had a long gestation period, causing him considerable trouble – he once described it as 'this animal of a Quintet'. Fauré started it as early as 1887 and continued to work on it for eight years before putting it aside. He then returned to it between 1903 and 1905 and the first performance was given in Brussels in 1906, nearly 20 years after its inception. The work was published, unusually for Fauré, in the United States by the publisher Schirmer.

When Fauré started work on the Piano Quintet his daily life was largely taken up with the money-making activities necessary for supporting his wife and children, working as choirmaster at the church of Saint-Marie-Madeleine in Paris and giving piano and harmony lessons. He was most easily able to compose during his summer holidays. Fauré and his music were to become familiar at the supportive and stimulating Parisian musical salons, hosted by figures such as the renowned singer Pauline Viardot or the American heiress Winnaretta Singer, the Princesse de Polignac. In the 1890s, as Fauré continued to work on the Piano Quintet, he began to be acclaimed as an innovative and inventive composer. Listeners found his music to be both rewardingly avant-garde and intoxicating. In 1896 he became organist at Saint-Marie-Madeleine and a composition teacher at the Paris Conservatoire, both positions that gave him increasing respect and influence.

Fauré's First Piano Quintet has three movements: *Molto moderato*, *Adagio* and *Allegretto moderato*. Fauré scholar Robert Orledge has described the opening movement as 'radiant with life and intensity', both qualities that could have been used at times to describe Fauré himself. The complex and often heart-rending slow second movement leads the listener into the opening quiet resolve and building intensity of the final movement.

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Mel Bonis (1858-1937)

Scènes de la forêt (1927-8)

Nocturne

A l'aube

Invocation

Pour Artémis

Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

Le jeune pâtre breton
(1833)

Auguste Brizeux

Dès que la grive est éveillée,
Sur cette lande encor mouillée
Je viens m'asseoir
Jusques au soir;
Grand mère de qui je me
cache
Dit: Loïc aime trop sa
vache
Oh! Oh! Nenni da!
Mais j'aime la petite Anna.

A son tour, Anna, ma
compagne,
Conduit derrière la
montagne,
Près des sureaux,
Ses noirs chevreaux;
Si la montagne, où je
m'égare,
Ainsi qu'un grand mur nous
sépare,
Sa douce voix,
Sa voix m'appelle au fond du
bois.

Oh! sur un air plaintif et
tendre,
Qu'il est doux au loin de
s'entendre,
Sans même avoir
L'heur de se
voir!
De la montagne à la
vallée
La voix par la voix
appelée
Semble un soupir
Mêlé d'ennui et de
plaisir.

Ah! Retenez bien votre haleine,
Brise étourdie, et dans la
plaine,
Parmi les blés,

**The young Breton
shepherd**

Once the thrush is awake,
on this still-damp heath
I will come and sit
until the evening;
grandmother, from whom
I'm hiding,
says: Loïc loves his cow
too much.
Oh! Oh! That's not so!
But I do love little Anna.

In turn, Anna, my
companion,
drives behind the
mountain,
near the elder trees,
her black goats;
if the mountain, where I
lose my way,
separates us like a great
big wall,
her sweet voice,
her voice calls me from
deep in the woods.

Oh! In a plaintive and
tender air,
how sweet it is to hear
each other from afar,
without even having
the good fortune to see
one another!
From the mountain to the
valley
the one voice called by
the other's voice
is like a sigh
of mixed sorrow and
pleasure.

Ah! Hold your breath fast,
absent-minded breeze,
and over the plain,
through the cornfields,

Courez, volez!

Dieu! la méchante a sur son
aile

Emporté la voix douce et
frêle

La douce voix

Qui m'appelait au fond du
bois.

run, fly!

Lord! that mischief has,
on his wing,

stolen away the sweet
and fragile voice,

that sweet voice

that called me from deep
in the woods.

Philippe Gaubert (1879-1941)

Soir Païen (1908)

Albert Samain

C'est un beau soir couleur de
rose et d'ambre clair.

Le temple d'Adonis, en haut
du promontoire,

Découpe sur fond
d'or sa colonnade
noire,

Et la première étoile a brillé
sur la mer...

Pendant qu'un roseau pur
module un lent accord,

Là-bas, Pan, accoudé
sur les monts, se
soulève,

Pour voir danser, pieds nus,
les nymphes sur la grève,

Et des vaisseaux
d'Asie embaument le vieux
port...

Des femmes, épuisant tout
bas l'heure incertaine,

Causent, l'urne appuyée au
bord de la fontaine,

Et les bœufs accouplés
délaissent les
sillons...

La nuit vient, parfumée aux
roses de Syrie,

Et Diane au croissant
clair, ce soir en
rêverie,

Au fond des grands bois
noirs qu'argente un long
rayon,

Baise ineffablement les yeux
d'Endymion.

Pagan evening

It is a beautiful evening,
light-ambered and pink,
the temple of Adonis, high
up on the promontory,
carves its black
colonnade onto the
gold background,
and the first star has
shone upon the sea...

While a pure reed flutes a
slow chord,

Pan, down there, elbows
resting on the hills,
raises himself up

to see the nymphs dance
barefoot on the shore...

and vessels from Asia
shed their fragrance in
the old harbour...

Women talk, using up this
unsettled hour,

leaning their urns on the
fountain's rim,

while the oxen, yoked
together, forsake the
furrows...

Night arrives, perfumed
with roses of Syria,

and Diana with her bright
crescent, dreaming
away the evening,

behind great black woods
silvered by a long ray,

ineffably kisses
Endymion's eyes.

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Une flûte invisible (1885) An unseen flute

Victor Hugo

Viens! – une flûte invisible	Come! – An unseen flute
Soupire dans les vergers. –	sighs in the orchards.
La chanson la plus paisible	The most peaceful song
Est la chanson des	is the song that
bergers.	shepherds sing.

Le vent ride, sous l'yeuse,	The wind beneath the ilex
Le sombre miroir des	ruffles the waters' dark
eaux. –	mirror.
La chanson la plus joyeuse	The most joyous song
Est la chanson des oiseaux.	is the song that birds sing.

Que nul soin ne te	Let no worry torment you.
tourmente.	
Aimons-nous! aimons	Let us love! Let us always
toujours! –	love!
La chanson la plus charmante	The most sweet song
Est la chanson des amours.	is the song that lovers sing.

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Piano Quintet No. 1 in D minor Op. 89 (1887-1905)

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Translation of Gaubert by Richard Stokes. Saint-Saëns by Richard Stokes from A French Song Companion (Johnson/Stokes) published by OUP.