

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 17 June 2023

RNCM 50th Anniversary: Made in Manchester

11.00am

Laura Bowler voice
Ruth Morley bass flute
Yifan Ma piano
Zack Smith saxophone
Yuliya Shkvarko soprano
Dylan Latham violin

Laura Bowler (b.1986)	Laura Bowler voice • Ruth Morley bass flute Wicked Problems for voice, bass flute and fixed tape (2020)
Steven Daverson (b.1985)	Yifan Ma piano Exotic vapour for solo piano (2008) <i>London première</i>
Andy Scott (b.1966)	Zack Smith saxophone Westland for solo tenor saxophone (2016)
Adam Gorb (b.1958)	Yuliya Shkvarko soprano • Yifan Ma piano Beggars Belief for soprano and piano (2019) <i>London première</i> <i>Outcast • Mama • Friends • Coroner • Echo</i>
Paul Patterson (b.1947)	Dylan Latham violin Luslawice Variations for solo violin Op. 50 (1984)

Please note that some of these pieces contain adult content that may not be suitable for younger audiences.

12.15pm-1.00pm

RNCM In Conversation

RNCM staff composers share their approaches to writing for voice.

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2.00pm

Camilla Seale mezzo-soprano
Joseph Ashmore baritone
Olias Saxophone Quartet
 Nick Rushworth saxophone
 Sam Nuttall saxophone
 Fred Donlon-Mansbridge saxophone
 Matthew Haworth saxophone

Sophie Clarke mezzo-soprano
RNCM New Ensemble
 Mark Heron conductor
 Dylan Edge violin
 Samuel Kane violin
 Nathan Jackson-Turner cello
 Leah Wing flute
 Benjamin Pinto clarinet
 Carys Nunn saxophone
 Juanjo Blázquez Garre piano
 Arthur Yu piano

Rebecca Anderson mezzo-soprano
Sarah Winn mezzo-soprano

Emily Howard (b.1979) Camilla Seale mezzo-soprano • Joseph Ashmore baritone
Threnos for 2 voices (2015)
 I. • II. • III.

Gary Carpenter (b.1951) Olias Saxophone Quartet
The North for saxophone quartet (2014)
 I. Lip Service • II. Lip Gloss • III. German Bite

Larry Goves (b.1980) Sophie Clarke mezzo-soprano • RNCM New Ensemble
3 songs for voice and ensemble (2021) *London première of 'Loppy'*
 Gennel/Ginnel/Guinnel • Loppy • Love

David Horne (b.1970) Rebecca Anderson mezzo-soprano • Sarah Winn mezzo-soprano •
RNCM New Ensemble
Brontë Songs for voice and ensemble (2023) *London première*
 Charlotte Brontë: Speak of the North! A Lonely Moor •
 Emily Brontë: Fall, leaves, fall • Anne Brontë: My Soul is
 Awakened • Emily Brontë: The night is darkening round me •
 Emily Brontë: It will not shine again

RNCM
ROYAL NORTHERN
COLLEGE of MUSIC

In Partnership with the Royal Northern College of Music

Laura Bowler *Wicked Problems* for voice, bass flute and fixed tape

Wicked Problems sets text from Timothy Morton's *Dark Ecology*. The flute and voice find themselves entangled in loops, gasping for air and incessantly thrown forward into the uncertainly interminable.

Many thanks to Timothy Morton for their permission to set this extract of text.

© Laura Bowler 2023

Steven Daverson *Exotic vapour* for solo piano (London première)

Legend has it that Cleopatra herself created a recipe for a perfume that has wafted through the imagination for centuries. The recipe is of course lost, if it ever existed; while earlier theories include ingredients such as bergamot, jasmine and blue lotus, more recent scholars believe the Mendesian perfume, as it is known, was a mixture of myrrh, olive oil, cardamom and cinnamon. This richly fragrant oil allegedly coated the sails of Cleopatra's ships so that her scent (carried on the wind) would bewitch Mark Antony before he set eyes on her; a scene immortalised in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

In 2012, an excavation at Thmuis, close to the modern Egyptian city of Mansoura, discovered glass manufacturing kilns of the sort used to make perfume jars during the Roman period.

© Steven Daverson 2023

Andy Scott *Westland* for solo tenor saxophone

Composed in late 2016, Andy Scott gave the world première of *Westland* in Holland at the Westland Saxophone Festival in January 2017.

Westland is an exploration of soundscapes that integrates carefully chosen multiphonics into the harmonic and melodic language, creating a musical journey that is at times fragile and at times robust. At the centre of the harmony are pivot notes that connect sections, whilst rhythmic tension and release is created almost as if notated *rubato*.

© Andy Scott 2023

Adam Gorb *Beggars Belief* for soprano and piano (London première)

As deliberately ambiguous as its title, this 19-minute five-poem song cycle tells the fragmented tale of a young unnamed woman, whose story is as lost to us as so many other fallen leaves in any city we care to name when winter comes...

We are invited to experience disjointed moments and memories of her life, related by herself, her mother, her many friends, the Coroner, and indeed by her echo, as we to try to piece together who she was, who she loved and ultimately what led to her death as just 'another' unknown homeless person...

This is the truth on our streets today. Wherever you live...

Beggars Belief is the fifth collaboration between Adam Gorb and Ben Kaye. Earlier works include the oratorios *Thoughts Scribbled on a Blank Wall* (2007) and *Eternal Voices* (2010) and the operas *Anya 17* (2012) and *The Path to Heaven* (2018).

© Adam Gorb 2023

Paul Patterson *Luslawice Variations* for solo violin Op. 50

The excitement, drama and humour often associated with the music of Patterson is much in evidence in this virtuoso showpiece for solo violin. Inspired by Polish folk music, it consists of an original theme and seven variations. The theme itself is borrowed from Patterson's own *Sinfonia for Strings* written for the Polish Chamber Orchestra in 1981.

Popular in style, the work opens and ends with an exuberant flourish, reminiscent of Romani music in its raw use of open strings and exciting dance cross rhythms. A series of short variations follow exploiting many techniques including the exotic pyrotechnics associated with Paganini's violin writing. There are calmer moments too in the central variations where the high and low registers are explored using complex double stopping and harmonics. The variations are grouped in such a way that the overall shape resembles a mini symphony: fast, slow, scherzo, fast.

The work's unusual title stems from Patterson's long and fruitful friendship with Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki. *Lusławice* is a small village in southern Poland near to Kraków where Penderecki had his country residence. It is here that Penderecki held his own festival of contemporary chamber music, and it was in 1984 that Penderecki commissioned Patterson to write this work for the distinguished Polish violinist Konstanty Andrzej Kulka. The *Luslawice Variations* is often used as a test piece for violin competitions and examinations and has now found its way into the repertoire of many a leading violinist both in the UK and abroad.

© Paul Patterson 2023

Emily Howard *Threnos* for 2 voices

In this extraordinary three-part song, Howard creates one sonic character from two voices, developing a joint musical language that explores the extreme registral differences of the two voices, often turning them upside down, in order to express emotional drama.

Says Howard, 'I was thinking of Shakespeare's line: "two distincts, division none" [*The Phoenix and the Turtle*]: I've been fascinated by the sound of the falsetto bass above the soprano; when the two voices are close to one another they sound tortured, and then this tension relaxes as they move into their own natural registers.'

There are no lyrics in *Threnos*, but the singers intone an irregular rotation of vowel sounds. Part I is marked 'a violent upheaval, fast, urgent, intense, continuous': both singers intone pitches that bend up and down (by a quarter to three-quarters of a tone), contrasted with utterances flaring with vibrato of varying intensity in music 'without measure',

the singers deciding on the precise length of notes. In Part I, urgent voices clash and careen in a rush of alarms, tension building with the slow winding-up and unwinding of microtones, pure tones so strikingly contrasted with florid vibrations, we could be hearing four voices.

In Part II, now marked 'less urgent, less intense', a mournful purity seeps in, the voices posing plaintive questions in contrary motion. In Part III, barlines and a naked consonance arrive, the bass singing above the soprano in organum-like unity, a shared rhythmic flourish suggestive of hope. It's as if we have finally arrived at the beginning of music. After an intense dissonance, each voice returns to its farthest corner.

© Helen Wallace 2016

With kind permission from NMC Recordings

Gary Carpenter The North for saxophone quartet

The North was commissioned in 2014 by the Borealis Saxophone Quartet and is in three movements.

I. Lip Service was originally intended as a reference to the government's attitude to the North of England (demonstrated at the time by a hilarious proposal to merge Liverpool and Manchester into one city called Manpool, now rebranded as 'levelling up') but served better to reflect the specialist technique used at the onset - and indeed the whole business of playing the instrument. The main conceit of this segment is the same melody's being played at exactly the same pitch by the higher three saxes one after the other whilst the baritone provides (most of) the rhythmic energy. There is much play with dynamic and tessitura contrast and section changes are pinpointed by the connective tissue of sustained trilled chords. The piece falls loosely into an A-A-B-A song structure.

II. In the spirit of the above I was going to call this movement either *Lessons Have Been Learned* or *Hard-Working Families*, but the rather soft, reflective, often smoochy nature of the material led me to succumb to the wholly more satisfactory (and consistent) *Lip Gloss*. This movement is in a brief rondo form: A-B-A-C-A-Coda.

III. Although it provides another neat saxophonic pun, *German Byte* is actually the area of the North Sea on a direct line of latitude with 'Manpool'. This movement revisits and reassembles the first movement's material - often (but not exclusively) - canonically. Sustained single notes parallel the trilled chords in *Lip Service*. The piece ends with all four saxes reiterating the first movement's version of the thematic material but now spread across the four available octaves.

© Gary Carpenter 2023

Larry Goves and Kayo Chingonyi 3 songs for voice and ensemble: Gennel/Ginnel/Guinnel, Lopyy, and Love (London première of 'Lopyy')

In 2021, the London Sinfonietta commissioned me to write some new songs. This was to set new text made as

part of special projects curated by 'Poet in the City', a range of poems made in collaboration with different local communities around the country just before and in the first few months of the pandemic. From the selection, Kayo Chingonyi's poetry immediately stood out to me. There are three poems (two set in 2021, one set for the RNCM in 2023) that serve as poetic definitions for words with particular resonance in Sheffield. These texts have so much of what I love to set. They are evocative, economical, playful, richly beautiful and, written as definitions, formally severe.

I worked on these while the country was still in partial or renewed lockdown, and the première was masked with the audience physically distanced. In this context, and entirely beyond anyone's control, Kayo and I could not discuss the setting and I didn't know who would be singing until after I'd finished writing. To be excited about something live, interactive and real, but still writing in a vacuum, affected these pieces. I imagined the poems as all having the same interacting characters. I intend these songs to be as approachable and beautiful as the text I was setting, but with a little bite brought on by an (almost) constant non-traditional bitonality.

© Larry Goves 2023

David Horne Brontë Songs for voice and ensemble (London première)

When considering texts for this song cycle, I sought a local connection. While the Brontë sisters are not exactly local to Manchester, if you know the Salutation pub around the corner from the RNCM, you'll see a blue plaque on the wall outside, on the Boundary Street side. It notes that Charlotte Brontë stayed there with her father in 1846, and as Elizabeth Gaskell's biography observes, commenced work on *Jane Eyre*. I pass this plaque every day when walking into college, which means I have passed it several thousand times!

I decided to set these five wonderful poems by the Brontë sisters, which share ideas and are ordered to create a larger narrative. The first by Charlotte sets the tone with a majestic, if bleak, depiction of a northern moor in twilight. The next poem is one of three by Emily, welcoming the onset of autumn and celebrating lengthening days and decaying falling leaves. Anne's remarkable poem forms the centrepiece and exalts in the gusts of air surrounding her and carrying her spirit 'aloft on the wings of a breeze'. The fourth poem, by Emily, is considerably darker, and in contrast with the previous song the writer is rendered motionless by the environment, despite an encircling storm. The final poem, again by Emily, is achingly concise, lamenting the final setting of a 'cold, bright sun.'

The instrumental ensemble comments on and complements the sung text, with interludes joining the five songs together; they are performed without a break.

© David Horne 2023

11.00am

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Laura Bowler

Wicked Problems for voice, bass flute and fixed tape (2020)

Steven Daverson (b.1985)

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Adam Gorb (b.1958)

Beggars Belief for soprano and piano (2019)

Ben Kaye

Outcast

My mind, my soul, my fear, my fate, my face,
My time, my eyes, my smile, my kind, my race,
Your kindness falls without a place,
To be alone... .. again, again... To be... alone... ..
Sometimes breathing is easy,
Sometimes breathing is hard.
Sometimes something hits you,
Right in the throat - right in the... heart...
Right in the throat - right in the... heart...

Mama

You're my baby,
Were my... baby...
Were, my blessed Angel ... then, my bane...
My-wonder one, you were the one,
Who others sought... in vain,
To love... to... blame...

Who knew you'd grow up, like you did,
Driving them crazy?
Owl eyes, skin pale as moonshine,
Lips as dreams of Autumn leaves,
Wild... untameable as air... ..
My baby, they fought over you,
Eagles, tearing at their prize,
In passion, wheeling 'til the end.
When he died, you had to go...
Always, always... to a safer place...

To hide your face, but we both knew,
The curse would never
Leave you...

Friends

Has anyone... heard, from her?
The last time that she called was when she moved...
She said it was a smaller place,
I thought heard a man's voice then,
It just went dead... David? Rick? Anyone?
Nothing. Nothing since then Jo-Jo my friend.
Rick, David, did you get a single call...
She said she had no food, I sent some money,
You know how vulnerable, she is...
How wonderful she is...
Rick, Jojo, she called me very late last night,
'Fags and sleeping bags' she said,
She couldn't pay the rent she said,
Then there was nothing after that ...
Nothing at all...
I searched the Shelters, all of them,
She goes to when the world goes bad.
Underpasses, doorways, all the normal places,
Jojo, Rick, David,
I never heard a whisper nor a word,
Until last night. She called me, desperate,
She said something, then she cried...
How a thousand thousand suits,
Never looked down at their boots,
But only ever at the sky? I'm so very sorry everyone,
I have bad news. The worst.
Thank you to everyone who contacted,
Local Police as I asked,
They found her.
Finally...Dragged her out...
She was the best of us...
She was the best of us...
How wonderful she was...

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Coroner

Subject, female, five foot two,
Approximately... eighteen I'd say?
Weight ... Jesus, six Stone three,
Natural skin tone... pale,
High cheekbones,
Slavic ancestry?
Track marks multiple, habitual,
Bruising on abdomen, Perimortem,
Hands... mangled,
Feet, necrosis,
Fingers, what's left of them...
Left hand... memory of a wedding band?

No evidence of recent sexual,
Activity... Oh God, Foetus consistent,
Development consistent...
With thirteen weeks.
Oh God...
Cause... of... death is:
Homelessness, addiction,
Hopelessness, new friends,
New Tricks,
Pneumonia...

When Autumn comes, they fall like leaves,
Like leaves...
Like the silent leaves, they are... the leaves, that fall...
Unwhispering, Unnoticed... Unnamed...
The falling leaves....

Echo

My mind, my soul, my fear, my fate, my face,
My time, my eyes, my smile, my kind, my race,
My kindness falls without a place,
To be alone... .. again, again... To be... alone... ..
Sometimes breathing is easy,
Sometimes breathing is hard.
Sometimes something hits you,
Right in the throat - right in the... heart...
Then it's hard.
It's so hard... So hard, So... very... hard
The falling leaves....
So silently they fall...

Paul Patterson (b.1947)

Luslawice Variations for solo violin Op. 50
(1984)

2.00pm

Emily Howard (b.1979)

Threnos for 2 voices (2015)

I. II. III.

Gary Carpenter (b.1951)

The North for saxophone quartet (2014)

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III. German Bite

Larry Goves (b.1980)

**3 songs for voice and ensemble:
Gennel/Ginnel/Guinnel, Lopy, and Love
(London première of 'Lopy') (2021)**
Kayo Chingonyi

Gennel/Ginnel/Guinnel

Noun

1.
an interstice
a quarter tone
last known
whereabouts
of missing persons
the world over

2.
From the Old English:
the coast's open maw
pointing the way
to the whale road
gap in the teeth
of a terraced street

Loppy

Noun/Adjective

1.
As threat is to vengeful mass
so this epithet stands-
in for striplings
who, like the colliers,
and mill workers,
and smiths
before them,

kept the wolf from the door
in the muck
beating a steady rhythm
from the argument
of sweat and ore

2.
dust-begrimed
soap-skeptic
dutty
dusty
crusty

3.
a thing on which to build
if you can see past the surface
a waistcoat of filth
uniform of an ancient guild

Love

1.
hang around
this town
will mind you
of how little
you need

2.
to speak
and find an echo
breathe
good air
amid
mid-afternoon's
demands

3.
as a water droplet
falls from spring leaves
indiscriminate endearment
fleck of grace
it lands
I see you

David Horne (b.1970)

Brontë Songs for voice and ensemble (2023)

Speak of the North! A Lonely Moor *Charlotte Brontë*

Speak of the North! A lonely moor
Silent and dark and tractless swells,
The waves of some wild streamlet pour
Hurriedly through its ferny dells.

Profoundly still the twilight air,
Lifeless the landscape; so we deem
Till like a phantom gliding near
A stag bends down to drink the stream.

And far away a mountain zone,
A cold, white waste of snow-drifts lies,
And one star, large and soft and lone,
Silently lights the unclouded skies.

Fall, leaves, fall

Emily Brontë

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.
I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.

My Soul is Awakened

Anne Brontë

My soul is awakened, my spirit is soaring,
And carried aloft on the wings of the breeze;
For, above, and around me, the wild wind is roaring
Arousing to rapture the earth and the seas.

The long withered grass in the sunshine is glancing,
The bare trees are tossing their branches on high;
The dead leaves beneath them are merrily dancing,
The white clouds are scudding across the blue sky.

I wish I could see how the ocean is lashing
The foam of its billows to whirlwinds of spray,
I wish I could see how its proud waves are dashing
And hear the wild roar of their thunder today!

*Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment
have ended.*

The night is darkening round me

Emily Brontë

The night is darkening round me,
The wild winds coldly blow;
But a tyrant spell has bound me,
And I cannot, cannot go.

The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with snow;
The storm is fast descending,
And yet I cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below;
But nothing drear can move me;
I will not, cannot go.

It will not shine again

Emily Brontë

It will not shine again;
Its sad course is done;
I have seen the last ray wane
Of the cold, bright sun.