

# WIGMORE HALL

Tuesday 19 July 2022 7.30pm

**Jean-Guihen Queyras** cello

**Raphaël Imbert** saxophone

**Pierre-François Blanchard** piano

**Sonny Troupé** percussion

CLASSIC *FM* Wigmore Hall £5 tickets for Under 35s supported by Media Partner Classic FM

*Invisible Stream* refers to that 'unseen current' that connects people - artists, improvisers, musicians - while transcending aesthetic and cultural boundaries. A perfect opportunity for Jean-Guihen Queyras and Raphaël Imbert to demonstrate the chemistry that is the main attraction in each of their collaborations! Between the virtuoso cellist and the creative sax player, there is a musical and spiritual spark that has already ignited audience response during their unforgettable concerts, in Forcalquier as well as at the Festival d'Art Lyrique in Aix-en-Provence, where both of them were associate artists in 2016. By creating this chamber quartet for improvised music-making, they participate in a common effort, anchored in their practice as a group, as an ensemble, as a forum for sharing. *Invisible Stream* is therefore a feast of improvisation and poetry, organized by four representatives of today's international music scene of the most dynamic type, be it in jazz or in classical music.

With his original compositions as their point of departure, Raphaël Imbert invited Jean-Guihen to improvise and interact along this terrain while also evoking the spirit of Édouard Glissant, Pierre Barouh, the works of Wagner, Prokofiev, Eisler, Schubert and many other adventurers in search of unseen currents. Joining their ranks, two other artists stand together with our sound explorers: Pierre-François Blanchard at the keyboard, having already been heard alongside Pierre Barouh, Marion Rampal, and on Raphaël Imbert's 'Music Is My Hope' project - a poet at first hearing and a majestic swing player; and drummer Sonny Troupé, master of the Guadeloupean ka drum and celebrated percussionist on the international jazz scene, whose sense of nuance transforms percussion into a new instrument for chamber music.

*Continued overleaf*

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## A history of the encounter

Naturally, it all started with our meeting! From the streets of Forcalquier, where I first encountered Jean-Guihen's cello, from the poems of Glissant and Chamoiseau punctuated by Sonny, from the songs of Pierre Barouh and Marion Rampal sublimated by Pierre-François, I saw the happy imprint of friendships conducive to musical magic. The opportunities offered by our common passion to play together alerted us to be open to the possibilities of the encounter. The circumstances of this discovery led us toward a creative terrain that proved unprecedented each time. Beyond our differences, there is an invisible bond – musical, poetic, social – that unites us and brings us together. *Invisible Stream* depicts this bond, makes it alive, makes use of it again and again to tell the story of the encounter. A universal and personal story, made up of questions, discoveries, and surprises. The underground rivers of Barouh, the deep roots of Glissant are other unseen currents, other stories of the encounter that quiver and vibrate in our cultural memories and our poetic imaginations. We arrive at a common meaning when we play, create, improvise, have fun, and come together.

None of us had any other ambition at each encounter than to recreate the feeling of surprise on such an occasion! I relish the chance to play with artists of this calibre, fully aware of the responsibility of being an active participant in such a group. For Jean-Guihen and me, it all started with our common desire to solidify our many shared experiences during the Festival des Rencontres Musicales de Haute-Provence in Forcalquier. I had been regularly invited by Jean-Guihen, Pierre-Olivier Queyras and the entire team, to appear and improvise with these magnificent classical musicians, thus creating a playful otherness on the basis of music invented for the occasion. But we wanted to find a regular framework for our musical exchanges and improvisations. I fondly remember other experiences with Sonny Troupé and Pierre-François Blanchard. By introducing them to Jean-Guihen, I knew that together, we could reimagine the definition of an original quartet devoted to improvised chamber music-making. Thus did *Invisible Stream* come into being, in the imposing setting of the Cordeliers Convent in Forcalquier; in the courtyard of the Emperi Castle; at the Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat Church, in 2019.

After two years of confinement, which has made us all plainly aware of the precious necessity of coming together, we met at Schloss Elmau, Bavaria, to finally record our programme, with the benefit of assistance from and vast expertise of our friend Alban Moraud. There is all the emotion of the reunion, and yet the feeling of having just left each other the day before, along with the fear that everything we have experienced lately is about to end. There is all the joy and reassuring fragility that make the moment deeply felt. There is all this repertoire, which we imagined as our common ground, and the chance to review several years' worth of recent compositions. As a staff composer at the Théâtre du Briançonnais, I saw this as an occasion to introduce new compositions alongside older ones, while

attempting to make a comparison with some 'standards' of a particular type (the Lieder of Wagner, Schubert, Eisler) to create a surprising jazz resonance with German Classical music.

*Exil*, a piece dating from 2000, for example, resulted from a project devoted to Malian writer Amadou Hampâté Bâ, whose work is especially relevant today. The suite *Akim's Spirit* dates even farther back. I had written it for the funeral of my best friend Akim Tchallgalldjieff, who met his end while mountain-climbing in 1996. A French-Armenian American, a convert to Zen Buddhism and inveterate carnivore, he represented the complexity and ambivalence of today's world, and taught me not to see this as a basis for anxiety. *My Klezmer Dream* comes from the New York sessions recorded on the ZZT label in 2009; it highlights a partnership linked to the recollection of popular music influencing so-called 'art music'.

Two new compositions are included as well. *Musique aux Images* is based on the premise that, if one writes music for the cinema, one could also write music for a film that has not yet been made. Any filmmaker is welcome to seize upon this piece and to use it as a basis for a script! And *So Long, Radio Voice* evokes the pleasure of my experiences, as a listener, producer, guest, while I was captivated by a particular medium so conducive to our practice. Wagner's 'O du, mein holder Abendstern' (*Tannhäuser*), juxtaposed with Schubert's famous 'An die Musik', is a reminder of the poetic and harmonic importance of German composers in establishing a modern musical language, both for jazz and for contemporary music. Using an approach that I experimented with in projects like *Bach Coltrane* (ZZT, 2007) and *Heavens. Amadeus & The Duke* (2013), the closing measures of this Lied-homage-to-music are 'looped' to give it an ecstatic Gospel feel. A game of improvisation that is also present in Eisler's 'An den kleinen Radioapparat', a sublime melody from his celebrated *Hollywood Songbook* (1942), in which Bertolt Brecht and Eisler, fleeing Nazism and war, evoke their years of (another) exile in the USA. Here, they address a small portable radio, the only link connecting them to their home country over the airwaves. We can see here that jazz has had an influence on Eisler, in another reciprocal encounter. Playing Barouh's song 'Des ronds dans l'eau' as a duo with Pierre-François is our way to reminisce about that magical moment when we both took part, alongside Marion Rampal and many other artists, in the singer's last concert. An encounter that came about thanks to Pierre-François – I owe him my eternal gratitude! Finally, Jean-Guihen and I play as a duo on Ornette Coleman's magnificent composition *Beauty is a Rare Thing*. We enjoy experiencing these occasions to play as a duo, such as the time I participated in Jean-Guihen and Alexandre Tharaud's 2020 album *Complices* (harmonia mundi) to play a JS Bach sarabande and John Coltrane's *Alabama*.

Indeed, beauty is no common thing, and it is enriched through every encounter.

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