

WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 20 April 2022 7.30pm Nicholas Daniel at 60

Nicholas Daniel oboe	Members of Chineke!	Ewan Millar oboe
Huw Watkins piano	Jennifer Brittlebank oboe	Bernice Lee oboe
Linton Stephens bassoon	Miles Bruce-Jones oboe	James Turnbull oboe
Beatrice Nicholas piano	Lorraine Hart oboe	Banita Wheatley-Holmes oboe
Ashok Klouda cello	Antonia Holloway oboe	Esther Williams oboe

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano (1926)

I. Presto • II. Andante • III. Rondo

Hannah Kendall (b.1984)

Tuxedo: (Copper); Ivory Mask (2021) *public première*

Sergey Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Trio for oboe, cello and piano *arranged by Lera Auerbach*

I. Moderato • II. Scherzo. Presto • III. Andante • IV. Allegro con brio

Interval

Birthday Cards for Nicholas Daniel (2022) *world première*

Thea Musgrave (b.1928) A Happy Birthday

Errollyn Wallen (b.1958) PEARL

David Matthews (b.1943) A Birthday Song

Helen Grime (b.1981) 2 Birthday Fragments

Overture • After Fernand Gillet

Hannah Kendall yes, flash bright lightning in my southern sky!

Antonino Abate Colori d'Oboe

Colin Matthews (b.1946) A Bagatelle

Trad/Welsh *Suo Gân arranged by Huw Watkins*

Eleanor Alberga (b.1949) Fleeting

Zoë Martlew (b.1968) Nick my pearls, you cry

Francis Poulenc

Sonata for oboe and piano (1962)

I. Elégie • II. Scherzo • III. Déploration

John Woolrich (b.1954)

Array (2017)

Thea Musgrave

Niobe (1987)

Joseph Bodin de Boismortier (1689-1755)

Concerto No. 2 in A minor for 10 oboes (1727)

Banita Wheatley-Holmes

Reflections (2021)

David Bruce (b.1970)

To the power of Ten (2019)

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Belated birthday parties are often the best. This evening's celebrates a performer who has enriched his instrument's repertoire, taught many of its finest players and been a positive force to classical music's good for over 40 years. Nicholas Daniel turned 60 in January. He could have marked his big anniversary with a solo recital at Wigmore Hall. That he decided to share the stage with a group of friends, including nine oboists he has either taught or mentored, says much about his generosity of spirit and spirit of adventure.

Two works by **Poulenc** – his early Trio and late Oboe Sonata – recall Daniel's Wigmore Hall debut, given with Julius Drake to mark the 20th anniversary of the French composer's death in 1983. His admiration for Poulenc's sonata, which he first played 50 years ago, is matched by his affection for Wigmore Hall: 'For so many musicians, it feels like home. John Gilhooly, who's been such a friend to music, especially throughout the pandemic, gave me carte blanche for this concert, so I decided to invite people I really care about to join me.'

Poulenc's Sonata for oboe and piano, his last work, was completed in December 1962. It is dedicated to the memory of Prokofiev, with whom Poulenc played bridge and piano in the Paris of the Roaring Twenties. Its serene *Déploration* reconciles the tensions between Parisian hedonism and Catholic spirituality that had so haunted Poulenc's earlier years. Daniel will perform Poulenc's Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano in **Sandro Caldini's** new edition. Caldini discovered that Poulenc reworked the score after its publication in 1926; his revised edition, based on the composer's 1928 manuscript, corrects mistakes included in the first print, incorporates a leaner piano part and includes changes suggested by Stravinsky. **Lera Auerbach** made her transcription for oboe, cello and piano of **Prokofiev's** Flute Sonata Op. 94 for the 2015 Verbier Festival. She added a cello part, transformed the composition's textures and eased the oboe into territory formerly inhabited by the flute.

The fourth of **Hannah Kendall's** *Tuxedo* compositions, inspired by the eponymous silkscreen artworks by Jean-Michel Basquiat, receives its public première this evening. *Tuxedo: (Copper); Ivory Mask* was commissioned for the International Double Reed Society's 50th anniversary. The ten-minute work, first performed online, confronts the transatlantic slave trade and recalls troubling echoes of its brutality. Nicholas Daniel and pianist Beatrice Nicholas have lines to play on the harmonica, an instrument adopted by African slaves on the plantations of the Caribbean and the Americas; the piece also places afro combs against the piano's strings and contains concurrent parts for wind-up music boxes that create a cacophony of classical compositions, *The Blue Danube Waltz* among them. Kendall's 'Birthday Card', *yes, flash bright lightning in my southern sky!*, for three wind-up music boxes and two oboe reeds, evokes verse by Guyanese poet and political activist Martin Carter.

'Birthday Cards' grew from an idea Daniel broadcast widely among his composer friends. His request for pieces lasting a minute or two fell on remarkably fertile ground. Around a dozen scores had arrived by the end of last month. They form part of Daniel's long-term project to diversify the oboe repertoire, itself a continuation of the commissioning work of Léon Goossens and Janet Craxton. 'Composers have written such a tremendous variety of music for me,' he reflects. 'Apart from my kids, it's the thing I'm most proud of in life.'

David Matthews's *Birthday Song* contains what the composer describes as a 'flamboyant' middle section: 'I think that might be a reflection of me,' notes Daniel. *A Bagatelle* by **Colin Matthews**, meanwhile, is short yet complex, rich in arpeggio figures for the oboe; **Errolyn Wallen's** *PEARL* offers a model of economy of means and generosity of expression, while **Helen Grime's** *2 Birthday Fragments* comprise a rhapsodic overture and companion-piece entitled *After Fernand Gillet*, named for the great French-American oboist and his taxing *Exercices sur les gammes, les intervalles et le staccato*. And Daniel's friend **Thea Musgrave** has wished him *A Happy Birthday*.

Nicholas Daniel discovered the music of London-based Sicilian composer **Antonino Abate**, presently studying for his BMus degree at the Royal Academy of Music, while judging the British Double Reed Society's inaugural composition competition. His *Colori d'Oboe* exploits the textural and timbral gradations of dynamic shadings and alternative oboe fingerings. **Zoë Martlew's** *Nick my pearls, you cry* for oboe and piano is described by its composer as 'a drag queen cabaret' and by its dedicatee as 'completely outrageous'. The 'Birthday Card' collection also includes a Welsh folksong arranged by **Huw Watkins** for oboe and piano and **Eleanor Alberga's** *Fleeting*. 'I'd already asked Eleanor to write a large work for oboe and string ensemble and was delighted when she agreed also to compose something for my birthday. *Fleeting* is exquisite, full of life and contrasts.'

The evening's finale includes Musgrave's *Niobe* for oboe and tape, performed by Ewan Millar, who is in his final year at St Hilda's College, Oxford, and a new work by **Banita Wheatley-Holmes**, a postgraduate oboe student at the Royal Northern College of Music. Her *Reflections* for two cor anglais and piano, another BDRS Composition Competition piece, was first performed this January at the Leicester International Music Festival. 'There's something beautiful about it that brings peace to its audience,' says Daniel. 'We all need that now.' Expect peace to yield to joy when ten oboes and their players muster onstage to perform **John Woolrich's** *Array* and **Joseph Bodin de Boismortier's** Concerto in A minor Op. 15 No. 2. They close the show with *To the power of Ten* by **David Bruce**.