

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 20 March 2022 7.30pm

Jess Gillam saxophone

Manchester Camerata

Caroline Pether violin I, leader

Katie Stillman violin I, associate leader

Jessica Coleman violin I

Inman Coco violin I

Liz Rossi violin I

Ricky Gore violin II

Gemma Bass violin II

Michael Jones violin II

Jody Smith violin II

Alex Mitchell viola

Ting-Ru Lai viola

Rachel Jones viola

Hannah Roberts cello

Wayne Kwon cello

Graham Morris cello

Roberto Carrillo-Garcia double bass

Toby Hughes double bass

Janet Fulton percussion

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

Shiva Feshareki (b.1987)

VENUS/ZOHREH (2018)

Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936)

Saxophone Concerto Op. 109 (1934)

I. Allegro moderato • II. Andante sostenuto • III. Allegro

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Chamber Symphony in C minor Op. 110a (1960 arr. 1974) *arranged by Rudolf Barshai*

I. Largo • II. Allegro molto • III. Allegretto • IV. Largo • V. Largo

Interval

Daniel Kidane (b.1986)

Be Still (2020)

Commissioned by Manchester Camerata

Max Richter (b.1966)

On the Nature of Daylight (2004) *arranged by Elspeth Mackay*

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

Entr'acte (2011)

Dave Heath (b.1956)

The Celtic (1998)

I. Ceilidh • II. Lament of Collessie • III. The Cooper of Clapham

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Experimentalist composer, turntablist and radio presenter **Shiva Feshareki** is best-known for her multi-disciplinary work and for love of combining electronics and amplification with more traditional acoustic ensembles. *VENUS/ZOHREH* was composed in a single afternoon 'on the grass on Clapham Common' and was inspired by Feshareki's interest in the work of planetary scientist Dr Philippa Mason. Feshareki writes: '*VENUS/ZOHREH* has two sides, or two energies. VENUS is the scientific energy... the actual physics of the sound, the bow gliding on the vibrating strings... The spiritual energy is ZOHREH and that is inspired from my mother Zohreh which in the Persian language means Venus.'

When Shostakovich published his memoirs late in life, he dedicated a portion of them to **Alexander Glazunov**, one of his most important Russian predecessors. Glazunov was director of the then Petrograd Conservatory during Shostakovich's student years and was hugely influential in transforming the Conservatory into an institute of national pride and renown. Glazunov's final composition, his Saxophone Concerto Op. 109, is also his masterpiece, and was one of the first works to elevate the saxophone to a 'serious' orchestral instrument. Composed just two years before his death, the Saxophone Concerto is a concise piece of craftsmanship in a rich, romantic vein. There is nothing superfluous, nothing sags. Nor is it self-consciously virtuosic or showy; instead Glazunov revels in the rich tone of the instrument, drawing out its lyrical side through the impassioned opening theme, expressive central *Andante* section and closing fugato. According to Glazunov, the concerto was written 'under the influence of attacks rather than requests from the saxophonist named Sigurd Raschèr', but sadly Glazunov never heard the fruits of his labours. Raschèr gave the work its première in November 1936, eight months after Glazunov's death.

It seems fitting, then, that **Dmitry Shostakovich's** Chamber Symphony Op. 110a should sit at the centre of today's programme. It began life as Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 8, composed after a trip to Dresden in July 1960 when Shostakovich witnessed the aftermath of the atrocities caused by the 1945 bombings. Horrified by what he saw and overwhelmed with emotion, Shostakovich set about writing a work to the 'memory of the victims of fascism and war'. In a letter to Isaak Glikman he described it as 'an ideologically deficient quartet nobody needs... It is a pseudo-tragic quartet'. The first movement, a brooding *Largo*, sets the tone for this sombre work, which opens with Shostakovich's signature DSCH motif in the cello and gradually unfolds in a slow, canonic exposition, drawing the music inexorably downwards. With Shostakovich's permission, the violinist and composer Rudolf Barshai later transcribed the quartet for chamber orchestra, as you hear it today.

Taut, rhythmic and meticulously constructed, **Daniel Kidane's** music has a distinctive, muscular voice, but *Be Still* marks a departure from the familiar. '*Be Still* is a reflective piece on the

year gone by', Kidane explains, referencing the onset of the pandemic. 'As I look back at the year and attempt to fix in my mind events, they slither away from my grasp - like clouds passing by in the sky.' The work's eerie, shimmering strings present time at a standstill, the usual rhythms of life softened, blurred, if not quite obliterated. There is a pulse there, a deep, circadian pulse, that seems to anchor the work as it ebbs and flows, but the world around it appears frozen in time. Muted, slow moving and deliberately anti-thematic, its causes us to reframe our perception of time and instead to make peace with an inner stillness and calm.

The same is true of **Max Richter's** *On the Nature of Daylight*, performed today in its arrangement by **Elsbeth Mackay**. If you think you have never heard Richter's music before, think again. Track two of Richter's second album, which was composed as a protest piece in the wake of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, has been appropriated by more films and TV shows than almost any other. Its slow-moving, layered strings and desolate minor harmonies - which are later overlaid with first one, then two keening violins - lend it an emotional resonance that tugs at the heart strings. There are echoes of *The Lark Ascending* and of *Schindler's List* here, but stripped back to a more barren landscape that exerts a powerful, hypnotic pull.

It is precisely this stylistic fluency that has made Richter's music so compelling, effortlessly shifting between worlds and referencing classical idioms within a broader, cinematic musical landscape. In *Entr'acte*, **Caroline Shaw** riffs on classical tropes in a similar way. Shaw was inspired to compose the work after hearing the Brentano String Quartet play Haydn's String Quartet in F Op. 77 No. 2, which has an otherworldly shift to D flat major in the central minuet. Shaw writes: 'I love the way some music... suddenly takes you to the other side of Alice's looking glass, in a kind of absurd, subtle, technicolor transition'. In the same way, *En'tracte* plays with our expectations: is it minimalist, modernist, classical? Although it begins with a sense of strong rhythmic conviction, here and there the strings all seem to shuffle off and explore entirely different terrain. It is deliberately - and wonderfully - hazy and elusive.

Today's programme concludes with *The Celtic* by **Dave Heath**, a work originally composed for violin and orchestra during Heath's time as resident composer with Scottish Ensemble, but performed today in his own arrangement for saxophone. As its title suggests, *The Celtic* draws upon Scottish folksong as its inspiration, although these influences weave in and out of Heath's own jazz-infused style. Composed in three movements, this concerto in all but name is book-ended by two upbeat Scottish reels, with a more languorous, impassioned lament at its centre.

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