

WIGMORE HALL 125

Saturday 22 November 2025
1.00pm

This series is supported by the Marchus Trust

Wigmore Hall Voices of Today 125th Anniversary Commissions Samantha Fernando

Manchester Collective

Sara Wolstenholme violin I
Lily Whitehurst violin II
Alex Mitchell viola
Peggy Nolan cello

The Marian Consort

Caroline Halls soprano
Rory McCleery countertenor
Will Wright tenor
Jon Stainsby bass

Orlande de Lassus (c.1530-1594)

From *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* (1600)
Prologue 'Carmina Chromatico' • I. Sibylla Persica

David Lang (b.1957)

I. our land with peace from *the national anthems* (2014)

Samantha Fernando (b.1984)

Wintering (2025) *world première*
I. Vista • II. Cloud Canvas 1 • III. Cloud Canvas 2 •
IV. To Do: Do Less • V. Snow on Snow • VI. Cocoon

Commissioned by Wigmore Hall (with the generous support of the Marchus Trust and the Wigmore Hall Endowment Fund)

David Lang

III. fame and glory from *the national anthems*

Orlande de Lassus

From *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*
VI. Sibylla Cumana • IX. Sibylla Europaea •
XII. Sibylla Agrippa

Andrzej Panufnik (1914-1991)

Song to the Virgin Mary (1964, rev. 1970)



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Wintering was inspired by Katherine May's book of the same name, which explores the idea of embracing life's fallow periods rather than resisting them. I found myself returning to a simple but transformative question: *What if I embraced winter instead of mourning the absence of summer?* Rather than pushing against the cold and darkness, could I find value in stillness and restoration?

Scored for four voices (soprano, alto, tenor and baritone) and string quartet, *Wintering* explores the tension between quiet introspection and the ever-present hum of the outside world. I was drawn to this ensemble for its rich potential – the voices not only convey text but also blur into the instrumental texture, becoming part of the quartet's fabric.

The sound world is often hazy and ambiguous. At times, it evokes frozen landscapes and moments of stasis; at others, it reflects a restless, churning mind caught in the noise of modern urban life. One movement (IV) is hectic and even playful – an attempt to find stillness through meditation, yet thwarted by internal chatter. *Wintering* moves through restlessness and retreat, ultimately leading the listener toward a place of stillness and quiet resilience in the turning of the seasons.

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Wintering is a process so natural that you might already do it without thinking. For author Katherine May, wintering was a cue, taken from the natural world, to invite in a fallow period of resting and recuperating, hoping that future light would shine brighter and fuller. The idea of wintering forms both the inspiration for Samantha Fernando's titular piece and a restorative frame for a concert of sounds becoming pure. Coming together with The Marian Consort, we likewise embrace these dark days and crisp nights: winter's energy distilled into a collective, shared experience.

Prophetiae Sibyllarum translates as the Sibylline Oracles or Prophecies. The sibyls were pagan prophetesses who foresaw Christ; each of their texts tell of his coming in ways that are mystical and fantastical.

Lassus needed music appropriate for these weird versions of visions, and he certainly found it. The opening prologue is a masterful cycle of key changes, moving swiftly through unusual, unrelated, constantly surprising keys, to conclude, slightly dazed, after two minutes of jerky revolution. The other motets continue in this similarly jerky fashion. It's like trying to move an image on a Microsoft Word document: one small adjustment and the entire shape unexpectedly jolts a few inches to the right.

Many of the guiding philosophies of modern concert presentation come from Bang on a Can, the American music collective founded by composers Julia Wolfe,

Michael Gordon and **David Lang** in Reagan-era America. The group set about bringing contemporary music to a wider market through marathons and concert staging, and balanced artistic ambition with economic pragmatism in an era of diminishing institutional support for music.

Early works by the Bang on a Can founders may be familiar to Collective regulars: Wolfe's bagpipe piece *Lad*, Gordon's caustic cello piece *Industry*, and Lang's *Killer*, for electric guitar. In 2014, Lang found himself sifting through a tranche of national anthems in the hope of finding common ground to eventually create some kind of universal meta-hymn, when he realised something. 'Within almost every anthem is a bloody, war-like, tragic core,' he writes, 'in which we cover up our deep fears of losing our freedoms with waves of aggression and bravado.'

From that came a more nervous, vulnerable thought: that, 'hiding in every national anthem is the recognition that we are insecure about our freedoms, that freedom is fragile, and delicate, and easy to lose.' And so came this piece, where pageantry and bombast are revealed as cruel, anxious gestures. 'our land with peace' undercuts the strident confidence of the text (sample: 'Death is the same for everyone / But dying for our land will make us blessed') by imbuing the setting with an essential sonic nervousness. 'fame and glory' begins the same way, but the anger of the words quickly dissipates, and dissolves into a long, looping refrain: 'We are awake.'

I wish I'd met **Andrzej Panufnik**, a composer who lived an astonishing life. Born in Warsaw, he left to study in Paris and returned in 1939, just before the Nazi invasion. Rather than fleeing, he stayed put while traditional life collapsed, forming a piano duo with fellow composer Witold Lutosławski; in bars around the city, they played Beethoven and boogie-woogie. Facing increased censorship from the Soviets, in 1954, Panufnik plotted his escape. Polish émigrés in London contrived a conducting engagement in Zurich to act as cover. Panufnik arrived, but word of his imminent escape got back to Poland, at which point he was immediately summoned to the nearby Polish Embassy. But, during a tense night-time taxi ride through Zurich, Panufnik gave his secret police pursuers the slip, and boarded a plane bound for Britain, where he was granted political asylum.

While exiled, Panufnik revisited the music of his homeland, particularly in this piece, originally for choir and later appearing in a version with string sextet. 'My desire to compose this piece was enkindled both by my memories of the naive beauty of the religious folk art of Poland, and by the moving and powerful medieval Latin text of an anonymous Polish poet,' the composer wrote. It flows with supple movement through Panufnik's trademark abstract patterns.

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Orlande de Lassus (c.1530-1594)

From *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* (1600)
Anonymous

Prologue ‘Carmina Chromatico’	Chromatic songs
Carmina Chromatico, Quae audis modulata tenore, Haec sunt illa, quibus nostrae olim arcana salutis Bis senae intrepido, Cecinerunt ore Sibyllae.	These songs which you hear, sung with chromatic progressions, are those in which the 12 Sibyls once with confident voice sang the secrets of our salvation.

I. Sibylla Persica	The Persian Oracle
Virgine matre status pando residebit assello, Lucundus princeps unus qui ferre salutem Rite queat lapsis tamen; illis forte diebus Multi multa ferent immensi fata laboris Solo sed satis est oracula prodere verbo: Ille Deus casta nascetur virgine magnus.	Born of a virgin mother, he will sit on a sway-backed ass, A pleasant prince, the one who can properly bring salvation to sinners; In those days it will chance that many people pronounce many sayings of great weight. But it is enough to give the oracle in just one word: He, the great God himself, will be born of a chaste virgin.

David Lang (b.1957)

I. our land with peace from *the national anthems* (2014)
David Lang

our land with peace
our land with swords
all of us are brave
we have one wish
we have one goal
we swear by lightning
and by our fragrant blood
heaven gave us life
and we alone remain
we fight for peace
our country calls us
and we hear her call
we hear the sound of our chains breaking
we crown ourselves in glory and we die
death is the same for everyone
but dying for our land will make us blessed

for we are young and free
land with mountain
land with river
land with field
if you need our death
our blood, our heart, our soul
we are ready
we lift our heads up to the rising sun
our peace
our values
our skies
our hearts
our songs
our tears
our time
our land
our seed
our pride
we have no doubts or fears
our faithful friends
are faithful in the battle
our land, we swear to you
our blood is yours to spill
keep watch, angels
keep watch, stars
keep watch, moon
our parents knew how to fight
the sun will shine on us forever
when the wicked come
let them prepare for death
for we would rather die
than live as slaves
our land, you fill our souls with fire
our blessed land
our parents left this land to us
our hearts defy our deaths
a vivid ray of love and hope descends
upon us and our land
bless us with long life
our land is love and beauty without end
harvest our vows, which ripen underneath your sun
our land, to lead a peaceful life
we give our lives
we were wounded
we were bruised
then we rose up
our past is sleeping in our forests
you are our garden
and our grave

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

Samantha Fernando (b.1984)

Wintering (2025)

Samantha Fernando
V. 'Snow on Snow' Christina Rosetti

I. Vista

bone-deep
cold path
walk on
still.

II. Cloud Canvas 1

Blue thoughts on a cloud canvas

III. Cloud Canvas 2

Walking through this time
a figure on a canvas of white
an empty space
Quiet
but for the vibration, the uncertainty,
the hum.

In the absence of purpose
one foot after the other
tracing a path through this frozen time
In search of the sun.

IV. To Do: Do Less

Let us begin by taking a few moments to settle into stillness
Find a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down.
Allow yourself to arrive in this moment, fully and completely. There is nowhere else to be, nothing else to do—just this moment, just this breath
I need to write that report for Tuesday and plan that meeting with Sarah.
Take a deep breath in and slowly release it
What time would be good next week? Maybe Thursday. I need to find a date to see Jo too. That could be Thursday though. I have the dentist next week, when was that? I'll need to check when I get in.
With each breath, allow your body to soften, to release any tension you may be holding onto
My website needs updating, remember to do that tomorrow. And get a wash on. The living room needs a once-over too. When did I last do that, was it Friday or Saturday?
Now, let your breathing return to its natural rhythm.
There is no need to control or change it. Just notice, the rise and fall, the gentle movement, the effortless nature of each breath.
What would Jo like for her birthday? I forgot last year, needs to be good this time. If I order it tonight then I'll have it time for next week.

As you continue to breathe, bring your awareness to the sensations of your body. Feel the weight of your body resting against the surface beneath you.
Tomorrow is busy, what are the things? Collect prescription, find a babysitter, laundry, living room, groceries. Can I fit this in before the meeting at 10.30? Probably. Possibly.
Thoughts may come and go—this is natural. Just as the lungs breathe, the mind thinks. You do not need to resist or engage with your thoughts. Observe them arise, like clouds drifting across the sky, then let them pass.
The packing list. Oh and World Book Day costumes.
No...no...back to the breath
Each inhale, each exhale, anchoring you
Did I handle it in the right way? I could have offered more supportive words. Did I seem distracted? I wasn't, I don't think. What was his expression? Maybe I could have asked more questions. I hope he is feeling alright now. I should call.
Each inhale, each exhale, anchoring you
What makes a good listener? It's more than hearing.
More than asking. It's being there. Really being there with them.
Each inhale, each exhale, anchoring you. Back to the breath, back to this moment.
Gently guide yourself back home.

V. Snow on Snow

Snow on snow
Water like stone

VI. Cocoon

Not home yet
but looking towards it.
The cold in my bones
I am in retreat.

The call of Winter grew loud
Saying pause
Saying breathe
Saying listen
Saying stop.

Burrow in
Curl up
Wait for the thaw

Look up
Look out
The space will hold you
The earth will ground you
Let go

Hearth
Heart
Home.

David Lang

III. fame and glory from *the national anthems*

David Lang

fame and glory
fame and glory
no valley
no hill
no water
no shore
the bloody flag is raised
the wicked howl
they come to cut our throats
to throw us back in chains
no sorcerers
no poison
no deceivers
no fear
we strive
we work
we pray
our star rises up
and shines between two seas
are the pledges of our fortune
with mind and strength of arm
we recognise ourselves
by our terrifying sword
with heads, with hearts, with hands
we will die before we are made slaves
our historic past
our sun, our sweat, our sea
our pain, our hope
the flower of our blood
branches of the same trunk
eyes in the same light
the sea, the land, the dawn, the sun are singing
our parents never saw the glory that we see
we turn our faces up
there is a star, the clearest light
bring us happier times and ways
each day is like a thousand years
victory, victory, victory
Long live our land, our people, our body, our soul
the light in our eyes is the brilliance of our faith
will we see you?
our woe or our wealth
our eyes turn east
we are awake

Orlande de Lassus

From *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* (1600)

Anonymous

VI. Sibylla Cumana

Iam mea certa manent
et vera novissima
verba.
Ultima venturi,
quod erant oracular
regis,
Qui toti veniens
mundo cum pace
placebit,
Ut voluit nostra vestitus
carne decenter,
In cunctis humilis.
Castam pro matre puellam
deliget.
Haec alias forma
praecesserit omnes.

The Cumaean
Oracle

My most recent words
will now remain certain
and true,
Because they were the
latest oracles of the
king to come,
Who coming with peace
for the whole world will
be pleasing,
Rightly clothed with our
flesh as he wanted,
Humble in all things.
He will choose a chaste
girl for his mother.
She will surpass all others
in beauty.

IX. Sibylla Europaea

Virginis aeternum veniet
de corpore verbum
purum.
Qui valles et montes transiet
altos,
Ille volens etiam stellato
missus olympo
Edetur mundo
pauper,
Qui cuncta silenti rex erit
imperio.
Sic credo et memo
fatebor:
Humano simul et divino
semine natus.

The European
Oracle

From a virgin's body will
come the pure eternal
word.
He who will cross valleys
& high mountains,
Sent willingly indeed from
starry Olympus (Heaven)
will be given to the world
as a poor man,
He who with silent power will
be king of everything.
Thus I believe and shall
myself say:
He is born of both human
and divine seed.

XII. Sibylla Agrippa

Summus erit sub carne
satus clarissimus atque
Virginis
Et vere complevit viscera
sanctum
Verbum consilio sine
noxa spiritus
almi,
Despectus multis tamen ille
salutis amore
Arguet et nostra commissa
piacula culpa,
Cuius honos constans
et gloria certa
manebit.

The Agrippan Oracle

The highest and brightest
will be born in flesh and
of a virgin,
and the holy word truly
has filled her womb
according to the plan of
the Holy Spirit without
harming her;
Though despised by many,
for the love of salvation
He will judge the sins
committed by our fault,
And his unchanging
honour and confirmed
glory will endure.

Andrzej Panufnik (1914-1991)

Song to the Virgin Mary (1964, rev. 1970)

Anonymous

Maria! Maria!
Tu luna pulchrior, Tu stellis
purior,
Tu sole clarior,
Maria:
Te sonent omnia Laudum
præconia,
Hymni et cantica, Maria.

Mary! Mary! You are fairer
than the moon, you are
purer than the stars,
You are bright than the
sun, Mary:
Let every paeon resound
in praise for you,
Every hymn and song, Mary.

Maria! Maria!
Tu cœli gloria, De stirpe
regia,
Tu Patris filia,
Maria:
Te omne canticum,
Collaudat cœlicum,
Melos angelicum, Maria.

Mary! Mary! You are the
glory of heaven, from
royal stock
you are the Father's
daughter, Mary:
every song in heaven
praises you,
the melody of angels, Mary.

Maria! Maria! O castum
lilium, Ora convallium,
Pro nobis Filium, Maria:
Sint pura mentibus, Corda
clientibus,
Te invocantibus, Maria.

Mary! Mary! Chaste lily of
the valley, pray
your son for us, Mary:
may your suppliants be
pure in heart and mind,
who call upon you, Mary.

Maria! Maria! Imple
formidine, Cor pœnitundine,
Amaritudine, Maria:
Cordis contritio, Hæc est
perfectio,
Atque refectio, Maria.

Mary! Mary! Fill our heart
with fear, repentance
and bitterness, Mary:
it is the heart's contrition
that is perfectness
and salvation, Mary.

Maria! Maria! Hic in exilio,
Adsis auxilio,
Cum tuo Filio, Maria:
Inter pericula, Et mortis
spicula,
Sonet hæc vocula,
Maria.

Mary! Mary! Here in our
exile, be present to help,
along with your son, Mary:
among our perils and the
thorns of death,
let this little word sound:
Mary.

Maria! Maria!
Mater altifsimi, Sponsa
sanctissimi,
Thronus celsifsimi,
Maria:
Post tot pericula, Fracta
navicula,
Sis nobis portula, Maria.

Mary! Mary! Mother of the
highest one, bride of
the holiest one,
throne of the most
exalted one, Mary:
after so many dangers for
our shipwrecked vessel,
be our safe haven, Mary.

Maria! Maria! Lingua
cum langueat, Ut loqui
nequeat,
Cor verbu suppleat,
Maria:
In morte optimum, Ad te sit
ultimum,
Vitæ suspirium, Maria.

Mary! Mary! When the
tongue falls silent, and
can no longer speak,
may the heart supply the
word, Mary:
in death may our best,
last breath of life
be towards you, Mary.

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