

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 24 October 2022  
1.00pm

Christian Lindberg trombone  
Roland Pöntinen piano

- Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) Sonata for trombone and piano (1941)  
*I. Allegro moderato maestoso • II. Allegretto grazioso •  
III. Swashbuckler's Song. Allegro pesante •  
IV. Allegro moderato maestoso*
- Anonymous Romance *attributed to Carl Maria von Weber*
- Christian Lindberg (b.1958) Land of the Rising Sun (2011)
- Roland Pöntinen (b.1963) Prélude d'automne (2018)
- Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) The Nutcracker Suite Op. 71a (1892) *arranged by  
Christian Lindberg & Roland Pöntinen*  
*I. Ouverture miniature • II. Marche •  
III. Danse de la Fée-Dragée • IV. Danse russe (Trépak) •  
V. Danse arabe • VI. Danse chinoise •  
VII. Danse des mirlitons • VIII. Valse des fleurs*

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This concert is being broadcast on BBC Radio 3



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There was a time, not so long ago, when trombonists in search of a recital programme were almost duty bound to include JA Greenwood's *The Acrobat*, Gustav Holst's *Concertante* and Weber's *Romance*, such was the scarcity of suitable solo works. While a few brave souls might venture into the technically daunting, aesthetically prickly territory of Berio, Xenakis, Stockhausen or Kagel, or tackle the surreal theatricalities of John Cage's *Solo for Sliding Trombone*, most followed the path of least resistance to take refuge in familiar brass band showpieces and arrangements of popular tunes.

Over the past four decades the repertoire landscape has changed beyond recognition, its range greatly expanded by the spate of new pieces written for or by Christian Lindberg. He has given the first performances of well over 300 works, more than a hundred concertos among them, while creating the formerly unknown career of solo trombonist. His lunchtime recital comprises trombone pieces past and present, as well as a near-miraculous, smile-inducing arrangement of the suite from Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*.

In the final months of the First World War, regimental bandsman **Paul Hindemith** was billeted in a 'bullet-riddled' village close to the German front line. Despite extreme hunger and fatigue, he composed the first in a series of sonatas that grew over the next four decades to encompass all the main orchestral string, wind and brass instruments and several more besides. Hindemith started work on his Sonata for trombone and piano in the opening months of the next global conflict, but became 'stuck in the middle' as he noted in December 1939. He completed the work in the autumn of 1941 at his new home in New Haven, Connecticut, an aptly named refuge for an émigré from Hitler's Reich. Although Hindemith was by now preoccupied with his duties as visiting professor at Yale University and unsettled by feelings of rootlessness, he set aside the concerns of work and life to focus fully on the quality of the Trombone Sonata's thematic invention and formal construction.

The fanfare-like motifs of the work's opening movement, stately yet as nervous and edgy as the period in which they were written, yield to the meditative *Allegretto grazioso*, a lyrical song-without-words for trombone introduced by a wistful piano prelude and flecked with contrapuntal keyboard interludes. Hindemith's '*Swashbuckler's Song*', the central *Lied des Raufbolds*, is propelled by his mastery of counterpoint and intensified by his dramatic contrasts of tonal light and shade. The movement's essential lucidity, preserved at its last by a held pedal note in the piano, flows into the finale. Hindemith here echoes a thematic fragment from the first movement, using it to evoke recollections of what has gone before while transforming the material into a stately saraband. The piece eventually reaches familiar ground with a recapitulation of the opening *Allegro moderato maestoso*, which in turn is crowned by a coda of heroic vitality.

Christian Lindberg and Roland Pöntinen's second recital album, recorded almost 40 years ago, concludes with the *Romance* attributed to **Carl Maria von Weber**. The piece is highly unlikely to have been written by Weber, not least since its low notes fall outside the range of the B-flat trombones of his day, and was probably created for bassoon or perhaps euphonium. Whatever its origins, the *Romance* provides a glorious romantic aria for trombone. Its melancholy piano introduction sets the scene for a lyrical main theme, complete with ear-catching melodic ornaments, giant leaps across the trombone's range and fleeting changes of expression and mood. The work's establishing theme, interspersed with brief piano transitions, is repeated with subtle variations and in a different key, building a sense of departure and return. The piece ends with a short coda marked by haunting repeated cadences that drop down the trombone's register to rest on a low C.

**Christian Lindberg** wrote *Land of the Rising Sun* in 2011 in tribute to the remarkable fortitude, equanimity and skill with which the Japanese people dealt with the aftermath of the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. The piece was first performed at Tokyo's Suntory Hall just months after the tsunami struck as part of a recital given in lieu of the appearance of Lindberg's Norwegian Arctic Philharmonic Orchestra, which had chosen to cancel its tour to Japan because of the risk of radiation.

*Prélude d'automne*, composed in 2018, stands as **Roland Pöntinen's** homage to the music of one of Hollywood's finest living composers, known for his scores to films such as *Six Feet Under*, *Revolutionary Road*, *Finding Nemo*, *Angels in America* and *The Shawshank Redemption*. Although the piece, originally entitled *Etude ergonomique à la manière de Thomas Newman*, contains no direct quotes from Newman's soundtracks, it encapsulates what Pöntinen describes as 'his simple but poignant textures. My piece can be described as a meditation on (around) the note F'.

While the concert suite created by **Tchaikovsky** from *The Nutcracker* in 1892 needs little introduction, Lindberg and Pöntinen's arrangement provides the freshest of takes on the composer's evergreen ballet score. It accounts for every technical trick in the trombonist's book - lip trills, vertiginous leaps, quicksilver tonguing and delicate legato playing among them - and appears to forge a few more for good measure. The 'Russian Dance' sounds here as if it was written for a valve trombone while the 'Chinese Dance' raises the technical stakes higher, literally so in terms of its stratospheric flights into the instrument's upper register. Above all, the arrangement preserves the enchanting beauty and irresistible energy of the original composition.

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