

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 25 November 2023
11.30am

This concert is supported by Cockayne Grants for the Arts, a donor advised fund at the London Community Foundation

COCKAYNE

Laurence Osborn Day

Solem Quartet

Amy Tress violin
William Newell violin
Stephen Upshaw viola
Stephanie Tress cello

Henriëtte Bosmans (1895-1952)

String Quartet (1927)

I. Allegro molto moderato • II. Lento • III. Allegro molto

Laurence Osborn (b.1989)

Lakes, Mists, Bats, Daggers, and Fountains (2023)

world première

Commissioned by Wigmore Hall

I. • II. • III. • IV.

Leoš Janáček (1854-1928)

String Quartet No. 1 'Kreutzer Sonata' (1923)

I. Adagio - Con moto • II. Con moto •

III. Con moto - Vivo - Andante •

IV. Con moto - Adagio - Più mosso



This concert is part of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust ticket scheme, offering free tickets to those aged 8-25



Our Audience Fund provides essential unrestricted support for our artistic and learning programmes, connecting thousands of people with music locally, nationally, and internationally. We rely on the generosity of our audience to raise £150,000 each year to support this work. Your gifts are, and continue to be, indispensable.

To donate, please visit <https://wigmore-hall.org.uk/audiencefund>

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management.

In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.

Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141.

Wigmore Hall is equipped with a 'Loop' to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • Wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



Dutch composer and pianist **Henriëtte Bosmans** (1895-1952) made significant contributions to Dutch musical life during the 1920s and 1930s. The first movement of her String Quartet (1927) is bookended by a call-and-response gesture: a beautifully sculpted melody in the viola, and its inversion then taken up by the entire quartet in hushed response. This lyrical moment leads to sheer ingenuity, as Bosmans tessellates winding melodic cells against one another like tiles of different sizes and shapes. The second movement is a pastoral, with Bosmans's transcendent, aching melodies set against reedy, musette-like chords. The final movement forms along a persistent galloping ostinato, which accompanies the movement's first, strident theme. Even when we arrive at a 'secret garden' in the middle of the piece - a strange, drooping waltz - these galloping rhythms persist to propel us towards the finale.

Tragically, Bosmans's work as a composer only began to receive recognition on the international stage in the late thirties and early forties, as the shadow of occupation loomed on the horizon. Bosmans was half Jewish, and by 1942, her career had been almost entirely destroyed. The end of the Second World War led to a period of renewed creativity and recognition, and Bosmans was knighted in the Royal Order of Orange-Nassau in 1951. She died the following year, in 1952, at the age of 56.

In recent pieces, I have been reaching for a kind of clarity and emotional directness that I hear in the music of certain artists I love, but find impossible to describe using words. It is a quality that only exists temporarily in the act of listening; it cannot be sustained for an entire piece. Maybe I could describe it as a kind of closeness, or rawness, or hotness, or the sensation of being touched through the musical fabric. It emerges in the music of CPE Bach, Schubert, Berlioz, Janáček and Tippett. I hear it also in Nina Simone's voice, in Bill Evans's piano, in J Dilla's sampling.

Lakes, Mists, Bats, Daggers, and Fountains. This gorgeous parade of images comes from a disparaging definition of Romanticism in the 19th-century Parisian newspaper *Le Corsaire*, as quoted in David Cairns's biography of Berlioz. Romanticism is defined as 'greasy hair growing over the coat-collar', 'sighing at least three times a minute' and 'dreaming of lakes, mists, bats, daggers, and fountains'. When I read the quotation, that final parade of images reached out and poked me. The images had conspired to rebel against their own glibness and communicate something vivid and fantastical in spite of the intentions of their author.

None of the four movements relates directly to lakes, mists, bats, daggers, or fountains.

Janáček's String Quartet No. 1 'Kreutzer Sonata' is a piece of staggering psychological depth and invention. It is a response to Tolstoy's novella *The Kreutzer*

Sonata, in which the protagonist, Pozdnyshev, becomes increasingly jealous of his wife after she befriends a violinist, Troukhatchevsky. The pivotal scene is a performance of Beethoven's eponymous sonata given by the two, which sends Pozdnyshev into a jealous madness, after which he murders his wife.

Janáček's response is compelling not because we can hear Tolstoy's novella unfolding in time, but because the themes of the novella - eroticism, companionship, jealousy, destruction - set themselves so well within the intimacy of the string quartet. Players might behave as actors, taking turns to sing and dance together, interrupt and destroy one another. And we might hear the trace of the beautiful voices and vivid psychologies of Tolstoy's doomed characters.

How does the drama unfold? Janáček juxtaposes and shuffles between panels with distinct musical colours, speeds and gestures. The effect of this partitioning is that the music behaves almost like film, as we switch between shots and perspectives within a single scene. This is encapsulated in the two gestures of the quartet's opening. A passionate outburst from the violins and viola, and, in the reverberation that follows, a restless, itchy dance in the cello part. The sheer contrast in mood, tempo and sound makes these gestures uncomfortable in their proximity to one another. These gestures comprise the principal theme of the quartet's first movement.

The second movement begins as if intoxicated: a dance that cannot help but accelerate before it has gotten its feet together. This is followed by some of Janáček's most pungent music: the cello's low trill and ugly seesawing in the violins, *sul ponticello*. Such interplay of passion and grotesquerie also powers the opening of the third movement. A modified quotation from Beethoven's 'Kreutzer' sonata is played out in canon between first violin and cello. This is interrupted by an acrid outburst from the other two instruments, echoing and looping the final four notes of the melody, like an ugly intrusive thought. This moment, of course, brings to mind that pivotal scene in Tolstoy's novel: the performance that dooms all three characters.

The final movement is grown from the same pair of gestures that opens the first. The motif reappears muted, in austere quartal harmonies, as if memorialised in sepia. Then, a plaint in the first violin injects hot blood into the icy veins of the music, and the opening motif builds in colour and urgency at each reinstatement. The sheer momentum of this final movement is stunning. Intensifying, aching melodies derived from the opening motif, propelled along by a seemingly limitless imagination for accompaniment — stumbling chromatic sighs, snapping folk rhythms, whirling arpeggios. When the quartet's surprising final bars arrive, it feels as though years have hurtled past in a matter of seconds.

© Laurence Osborn 2023

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.