

WIGMORE HALL

Thursday 3 July 2025
7.30pm

Siglo de Oro

Patrick Allies director
Ailsa Campbell soprano
Fiona Fraser soprano
Rachel Haworth soprano
Elspeth Mairwen Piggott soprano
Katherine Nicholson alto
Rebekah Nießer-Jones alto

Amy Tress violin

Joe Bates electronics

Paul Bentley-Angell tenor
Chris Fitzgerald-Lombard tenor
Oscar Golden-Lee tenor
James Gooding bass
David Le Prevost bass
Chris Webb bass

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c.1525-1594)

Jonathan Harvey (1939-2012)

O spectabiles viri (c.1150)

I. Adagio from Sonata No. 1 in G minor for solo violin
BWV1001 (1720)

Lamentations for Maundy Thursday (set III) (1588)

Stabat Mater (2004)

Interval

Ben Rowarth (b.1992)

The Fall (2025) *world première*

*Prologue • Movement 1 • Interlude 1 •
Movement 2 • Interlude 2 • Movement 3 •
Interlude 3 • Movement 4 • Interlude 4*



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The serene, demure sounds of **Hildegard of Bingen's** 12th-century plainchant disguise an imaginative approach to text selection and setting. *O spectabiles viri* is part of the *Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum* (Symphony of the Harmony of Celestial Revelations), and forms one part of a pair of antiphons 'for patriarchs and prophets'.

As Nathaniel Campbell writes, 'the intensity of [Hildegard's] own visionary experiences, which were the driver of her entire religious life, made her uniquely sympathetic with the prophets of old.' Perhaps this explains the particularly vivid imagery present in *O spectabiles*: the phrase 'Et viventem lucem' – a living, piercing light – sweeps up into the very top of the register; later, there are references to shining lamps, the mysteries of the mountain, and wondrously circling wheels.

The focus of this programme by Siglo de Oro is the première of Ben Rowarth's new commission *The Fall*, a piece in which multiple disparate parts interleave then dissolve into a whole. But something similar could be said of the programme's total span, which forms a large counterpoint of contrasting voices, all engaged in a process of knitting together, then smoothing out.

One of the key voices in this programming counterpoint is the solo violin, as Amy Tress plays a movement from **JS Bach's** Sonata No. 1 BWV1001. Composed at the tail end of the 1710s, while the composer was working in Köthen as *Capellmeister* under the patronage of Prince Leopold, this Sonata exudes calm, the first movement muted somewhat. It is harmonically and expressively wide-ranging and takes us quite a distance from the home key of G minor.

The interleaving then takes on a historical dimension, as **Giovanni di Luigi Palestrina** meets the English composer Jonathan Harvey. Palestrina's *Lamentations for Maundy Thursday* set the Lamentations of Jeremiah, verses which initially tell of the fall of a city, represented in the form of a disconsolate woman – apt for this programme. The third Maundy Thursday set features some of the most bleak moments in the liturgy. But despite the occasional moment of pungent word painting – the diminished chord adorning the end of the phrase, 'for I have become vile', for example – the harmonic palette is bright, the textures imitative and serene.

Some 400 years after Palestrina, a flame was lit inside of a young **Harvey** when he heard some startling improvisations coming from the organ loft at his local church. And, while Harvey's mature works would grapple with a range of religious and spiritual traditions – including Buddhism, Sufism and Hinduism – he retained a reverence for the Anglican choral tradition, seen in works like *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco* – built on references to his chorister training, and the bells at Winchester Cathedral – or his setting of the Anglican canticles.

The latter sought to fuse incongruous worlds: specifically, the Anglican choral tradition with more adventurously expressive techniques from Harvey's compositional palette. In his reworking of Palestrina's

Stabat Mater, he sought another fusion, combining Palestrina's music with electronic manipulation. Harvey combines three versions of the *Stabat Mater*: one sung live by the choir, one processed live from microphones, and one pre-recorded by another choir and transposed, with an engineer tasked with smoothing the transitions between sound sources. This smooth blending takes us to the interval.

The centrepiece of this concert is *The Fall*, composed by **Ben Rowarth**, to a libretto by **Sophia Carr-Gomm**. It tells the story of the Trojan War through the eyes of Cassandra, princess of Troy and soothsayer destined never to be believed. Cassandra predicts Troy's destruction, warning her people not to accept the gift of a wooden horse from the Greeks. The piece concludes with Cassandra's death, having seen her father Priam killed, her mother Hecuba enslaved, her city in flames, and her premonitions unheeded. 'Some sweet mercy at least,' Carr-Gomm writes.

Rowarth describes *The Fall* as a secular oratorio, but the piece also acts as a modern-day parable. 'In 2025 it is now commonplace to hear public rhetoric that attacks "experts", academics or scientists,' Rowarth writes: 'As such, the pressing issue of climate change has been marred by false information and slander that has sought to discredit those predicting its likely effects and slow the progress of solutions to this existential problem.'

Thus, the piece's narrative is interrupted by four interludes, named after four imminently or historically submerged cities: New Orleans, Dhaka, Betio – the main settlement on the Pacific island of Kiribati – and the ancient city of Thoris Heracleon. 'I am not seeking to make a political statement,' Rowarth notes, but instead to highlight the greed, obfuscation and misogyny common to Greek society and ours. Traced through these interludes is a poem by Carr-Gomm, translated into several dead or dying languages: Ancient Greek; Scots Gaelic; Saami; Hittite; and Awa-Guaja, from Brazil.

Sonically, the piece builds on a selection of key gestures. On top of a bedrock of ostinatos and harmonic drones, Rowarth adds a fractured, pointillistic approach to vocal textures – with shards of sentences dispersed around the choir – and embraces non-sung vocal writing, with a wide variety of whispered directions, as well as audible breaths in and out.

To this he adds an electronic track, produced by the choir, Tress, cellist Maddie Cutter and producer Tom Mungall. All these ideas come together to create the illusion of circular time, Rowarth says. 'Aside from being a fun concept to play with musically, it also looks to try and create, in some way, Cassandra's own experience of the world – where future, past, present are one.'

'All of the music in the piece is finally heard through the speakers literally reversing in the final movement,' Rowarth concludes.

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Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

| O spectabiles viri (c.1150) <i>Liturgical text</i> | O men of sight |
|---|---|
| O spectabiles viri qui pertransistis, Occulta aspicientes, Per oculos spiritus Et annuntiantes In lucida umbra acutam Et viventem lucem In virga germinantem, Que sola floruit De introitu Radicantis luminis: | O men of sight—what a sight! You’ve passed, as mysteries perceiving, through spirit’s eyes to announce in shining shadow a living, piercing light that buds upon that single branch that flourished at the entrance of deep-rooted light: |
| Vos antiqui sancti, Predixistis salvationem Exulum animarum Que inmerse fuerant morti, Qui circuisti Ut rote mirabiliter Loquentes mistica montis Qui celum tangit, Pertransiens ungendo multas aquas, Cum etiam inter vos Surrexit lucida lucerna, Que ipsum montem precurrens ostendit. | You saints of old! You have foretold salvation of souls in exile plunged, in death immersed. You circled wondrously like wheels, proclaimed the mountain’s mysteries whose top the heavens touched and passed through many waters with anointing—yet still among you rose a shining lamp that raced ahead, that mountain to reveal. |

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Adagio from Sonata No. 1 in G minor for solo
violin BWV1001 (1720)

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
(c.1525-1594)

Lamentations for Maundy Thursday (set III)
(1588)
Biblical text

| Incipit lamentatio Jeremiæ... Quomodo sedet sola civitas | Here begins the Lamentation of the Prophet Jeremiah ... How desolate lies the city |
|--|--|
| <i>Aleph</i> Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo: Facta est quasi vidua domina gentium; Princeps provinciarum facta est sub tributo. | <i>Aleph</i> How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become, she that was great among the nations! She that was a princess among the cities has become a vassal. |
| <i>Beth</i> Plorans ploravit in nocte, et lacrimae eius in maxillis eius; Non est qui consoletur eam, ex omnibus caris eius; Omnes amici eius spreverunt eam, et facti sunt ei inimici. Ierusalem, Ierusalem, Convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum. | <i>Beth</i> She weeps bitterly in the night, tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God. |

Jonathan Harvey (1939-2012)

Stabat Mater (2004)

| | |
|---|--|
| Stabat mater dolorosa juxta Crucem lacrimosa, dum pendebat Filius. | At the Cross her station keeping, stood the mournful Mother weeping, close to her Son to the last. |
| Cuius animam gementem, contristatam et dolentem pertransiuit gladius. | Through her heart, His sorrow sharing, all His bitter anguish bearing, now at length the sword has passed. |
| O quam tristis et afflicta fuit illa benedicta, mater Unigeniti! | O how sad and sore distressed was that Mother, highly blest, of the sole-begotten One. |
| Quae mœrebat et dolébat, pia Mater, dum vidébat nati pœnas ínclyti. | Christ above in torment hangs, she beneath beholds the pangs of her dying glorious Son. |
| Quis est homo qui non fleret, matrem Christi si vidéret in tanto supplicio? | Is there one who would not weep, whelmed in miseries so deep, Christ's dear Mother to behold? |
| Quis non posset contristári Christi Matrem contemplári dolentem cum Filio? | Can the human heart refrain from partaking in her pain, in that Mother's pain untold? |
| Pro peccátis suæ gentis vidit Jésum in torméntis, et flagéllis súbditum. | Bruis'd, derided, curs'd, defiled, She beheld her tender child All with bloody scourges rent. |
| Vidit suum dulcem Natum moriendo desolátum, dum emisit spíritum. | For the love of His own nation, Saw Him hang in desolation, Till His spirit forth He sent. |
| Eja, Mater, fons amóris me sentíre vim dolóris fac, ut tecum lúgeam. | O thou Mother! fount of love! Touch my spirit from above, make my heart with thine accord: |
| Fac, ut árdeat cor meum in amándo Christum Deum ut sibi compláceam. | Make me feel as thou hast felt; make my soul to glow and melt with the love of Christ my Lord. |
| Sancta Mater, istud agas, crucifixi fige plagas cordi meo válide. | Holy Mother! pierce me through, in my heart each wound renew of my Savior crucified: |

| | |
|---|---|
| Tui Nati vulneráti, tam dignáti pro me pati, pœnas mecum dívide. | Let me share with thee His pain, who for all my sins was slain, who for me in torments died. |
| Fac me tecum pie flere, crucifixo condolére, donec ego víxero. | Let me mingle tears with thee, mourning Him who mourned for me, all the days that I may live: |
| Juxta Crucem tecum stare, et me tibi sociáre in planctu desídero. | By the Cross with thee to stay, there with thee to weep and pray, is all I ask of thee to give. |
| Virgo vírginum præclára, mihi iam non sis amára, fac me tecum plángere. | Virgin of all virgins blest!, Listen to my fond request: let me share thy grief divine; |
| Fac ut portem Christi mortem, passiõnis fac consórtem, et plagas recólere. | Let me, to my latest breath, in my body bear the death of that dying Son of thine. |
| Fac me plagis vulnerári, fac me Cruce inebriári, et cruóre Filii. | Wounded with His every wound, steep my soul till it hath swooned, in His very Blood away; |
| Flammis ne urar succensus, per te, Virgo, sim defensus in die iudicii. | Be to me, O Virgin, nigh, lest in flames I burn and die, in His awful Judgment Day. |
| Christe, cum sit hinc exire, da per Matrem me venire ad palmam victóriæ. | Christ, when Thou shalt call me hence, be Thy Mother my defense, be Thy Cross my victory; |
| Quando corpus moriétur, fac, ut ánimæ donétur paradisi glória. | While my body here decays, may my soul Thy goodness praise, Safe in Paradise with Thee. |

Interval

Ben Rowarth (b.1992)

The Fall (2025)
Sophia Carr-Gomm

Prologue

Hittite

Movement 1

She
She strides up the stone steps
She
To the temple
In this great city
The city of Troy

She

She is

Cassandra, Priestess
Daughter of a Queen, Hecuba
Daughter of a King, Priam
Sister to the Warriors, Hector and Paris

She

She

Cassandra, mortal

Of the Gods, there is Apollo
He shines, he is mighty
He protects us
Molton flame
The sinews and curves of his muscular features Strength,
protection and knowledge
Music and poetry, he is a God

A God

A God

He sees her

Cassandra

Tendrils unfurl, the light falls quite particular

Something shifts, he's moved, oh he is moved
He yearns for her

An offering, he makes her an offering, a gift, just for her

Seeing.

She will be able to see, further
See

Further than the far reaches
See
Faster than the light strides
See
Quicker, and before anyone else

To know.

Know the future
Goddess-like when she is only mortal
She is only mortal after all

To venture in the slipstream
Is tempting

A gift from a God
A God such as he

But, it is only given if
If
If
She will
Give herself to him
Open herself, her body
To him, for him, for them
Pushing into her
Exulting and breathing

He is beautiful
She is beautiful

She desires this...

Closer he comes to her
His forehead to hers
Golden light
Passes through
Into her and as she wills her eyes to open
She sees

Oh
Oh

(Silence)

The earth moves
A violent future
behold
Flashing bright

The earth moves

(Silence)

The leaves curve to listen
The birds hush to watch
The mountains loom in curiosity

Work continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly
as possible.

Now he can claim her

But hold

She will not
She has changed
She will not
Not after what she has seen

A Turning
She turns away
He turns on her

Apollo
He

God that he is
Strikes

A Curse

He Curses her, he curses her, he curses her

The proclamation:
No-one will believe her prophecies
No-one
She shall be alone with her visions
Alone with the truth.

Interlude 1 (New Orleans)

Movement 2

Cassandra had warned that her own brother,
Paris would be the ruin of Troy

Cassandra: "Troy will fall"

"He"

"He"

But nobody had listened
Nobody had believed

The truth comes
Often under cover
Sideways and sudden

A secret
Hush
Hush

Heleana
Glorious Heleana
Steps onto the ship
Tip toe
Cloaked by nightfall
Hiding
Her heart beats with Paris
She betrays Menelaus

The owl watches
The fish dive deep
They do not want to know

Hush
Hush
Hurry
A journey
Set sail
A secret
Across the sea
To Troy

Oh
Oh

Tremors
A deep rumble

Menelaus returns home
The earth tremors
Heleana is gone
Gone
She has left him
Taken to Troy

Heat rises
Flames of jealousy burn bright
Wrath
The Trojans have dishonoured him
He has been disrespected
Fury
Rage

He bursts, bursts through to the King,
Agamemnon
The Grecian army must reclaim her, murder Paris and
destroy Troy

Agamemnon listens. Silence falls

Agamemnon bends. It is time to rise. They will not take
what is rightfully ours.
The king has spoken, Menelaus now may bring about the
turning.
The order to battle.
Lick with flames, spark with metals, howl in the night - we
will not stand for such betrayal.
We follow the king into battle - we travel to Troy!

The howl is heard and carried across the ocean
By birds heading North and Eastward
The tide turns, the wind catches them, slowing their sail,
as they hurry back home to Troy
King Priam bends too, to the will of his son's heart, who
cannot be without Helen

A ripple of whispers throughout the land
They will be followed by a fury they have yet to witness

In Troy the whispers come

The Gods are angry
The people hear
Whispers
Whispers of war
The Greeks are coming
A battle must be won

A searing
Shockwaves ripple from Greece to Troy
Human Greed
Pride

Gathering forces
Young
Brave
Frightened
Old
Strong
And the weak
Men, women, children
All
Metal clashing
Swarms
To fight
To fight

They are coming

They are coming

They are coming

Interlude 2

(Dhaka)

Movement 3

Scots Gaelic

The war has raged
Raged for ten long years
Ten circles around the sun
And it is burning out
Charred earth
Aching bones

Cassandra's brother, Hector, slain
Dragged across the dusty earth
Vultures arch their necks
Claiming the dead

Troy has not fallen

Visions
Cassandra
Cassandra sees
A gift
An offering

Deception

A peace offering by the Greeks to the Tojans
A magnificent horse carved in wood
To mark
Mark the end of war

Cassandra says "This gift will be the fall of Troy"
"Her prophecy is unwelcome"
It does not chime"
"She lies"
"Story weaver"
"The deceiver"

"Your words fall deaf on our ears.
You may cry but we cannot hear you.
Mute oracle."

Priam: stay within these walls of Troy
'You are safe within'
The danger is outside

These walls keep us safe.
These walls
Hold us
We keep them out

Silent tears fall
Fall
Falling
From Cassandra's eyes
Tumbling
Rolling
A silent tsunami
Is coming

They will not hear it
They will not know it
But it shakes her bones
She warns
This city and its people will fall.

Creaking
An opening
The great doors of Troy open
The majestic offering
Towering
Wooden stallion
Rolling into the city
Turning
Creaking
The wheels of the horse are turning
The symbol of peace
A tremendous gift
From Greek to Trojan
This beast
Peace at last
Peace at long last

Work continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

Interlude 3

(Betio)

So sleep my babe in peace and safety
With guardians around you
All through the night
Soft hours are creeping
In slumber steeping
Here in my loving arms you're sleeping

So I'll be watching forever around you
These walls surround you
All through the night
No fears disarm you
Or dangers alarm you
For they will let no peril harm you

So while the moon her watch is keeping
The weary world sleeping
All through the night
And over your dreams
Delights gently stealing
Tomorrow's bright visions slowly revealing

Turn not to the noises the dark, the creaking
The mind's terrors seizing
All through the night
Turn away from the shadows
That sad fate will cast you
For they cannot harm you within my arms

Movement 4

Creaking
An opening
The great doors of Troy open
The majestic offering
Towering
Wooden stallion
Rolling into the city
Turning
Creaking
The wheels of the horse are turning
The symbol of peace
A tremendous gift
From Greek to Trojan
This beast
Peace at last
Peace at long last

Night is falling
The wheels of fate are turning
The truth is often revealed under the cover of night
And night is falling

The people sleep
Dreaming of peace
Drunk on victory
Unaware

Of the cracking
The opening
Nimble stepping
Down
From inside the belly of the beast
Crawling
Greek warriors
Descend on the city
And silently slay the sleeping
And the drunk
Enslaving
Savaging
Destroying

Cassandra's father, King Priam, killed
Hecuba, her mother, enslaved
Cassandra
Her fate worse than death
A half-life of torture
To then be killed
Some sweet mercy at least
Troy is burning

All that once was
Is now no more.

Interlude 4

(Thonis-Heracleion)

-

Poem

The Interludes also include words from a poem written by Sophia Carr-Gomm to go alongside the libretto.

The earth will turn without us
As we savage our world
She will return the gesture
Pain done unto others
Is pain done to ourselves
May we have the humility to save our home
To save ourselves.

Excerpts from this poem have been translated into the following languages: Hittite, Ancient Greek, Saami, Scottish Gaelic, Awa-Guaja. They represent languages that are currently either dying out or extinct.

Hittite

Trans. Christopher Metcalf

Utne-shummet wehatta
Man annan-shumman hunikweni
Man-shmash hunikzi
Nu tamiuman idalu
Idalu-shummet
Ehu annan-shumman laweni
Ehu shummarsh laweni

Scots Gaelic

Trans. Norma Parkinson, Siusaidh McNeill, Murchadh
Macleòid, Eilidh Danson

Tionndaidh ar saoghal às ar n-aonais
Fhad 's a creachaidh sinn ar màthair
Bheir I air his an gluasad
Is e pian a thèid a dhèanamh air deoine eile
Pian a thèid a dhèanamh oirnn fhìn

Small excerpts used from:

Ancient Greek

Pain - páschō

Turn - trépō

Mother - mētēr

Harm (savage) - blábē

Earth/World - Gaia

Saami

Earth/World - Eana

Home - ruoktu

Pain - moras

Awa-Guaja (Spoken by Awa tribe in Maranhao, Brazil)

Pain - Ahi

Earth/World - wi