

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 7 October 2023

A Portrait of Joseph Phibbs

11.00am

Piatti Quartet

Michael Trainor violin

Emily Holland violin

Miguel Sobrinho viola

Jessie Ann Richardson cello

Huw Wiggan saxophone

Noriko Ogawa piano

Guy Johnston cello

Joseph Phibbs (b.1974)

Night Paths (2022)

Passacaglia - Neon - Lumina - Blues

Elegy, in memory of Steven Stucky (2016)

String Quartet No. 1 (2014)

*I. Andante e dolce • II. Andante (Canto I) – Con forza •
Duo 1: Tranquillo • III. Allegro • Duo 2: In the style of a
folk melody • IV. Andante (Canto II) – Più mosso – Duo 3
• Duo 4: Adagio – Grave (Canto III) • V. Largo (Vocalise)*

Cello Sonata (2020-1)

*I. Prelude - • II. Threnody • III. Soliloquy •
IV. Ghost-dance - • V. Notturmo • VI. Vocalise*



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/support-us/wigmore-hall-audience-fund>

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



Night Paths: Rhapsody for alto saxophone and piano

This 13-minute work was commissioned by Huw Wiggin as a companion piece to the Debussy *Rhapsodie* (1911). In keeping with a conventional rhapsody, the piece is cast in a continuous single-movement form, with frequent and often abrupt changes of mood.

There are four main sections: *Passacaglia*, *Neon*, *Lumina*, and *Blues*, which is followed by a short coda. The piano provides a range of backdrops, some frenetic and others very still, through which the saxophone might be said to 'weave a path', at times with euphoric energy, and elsewhere in a more subdued, reflective and even dejected manner. A recurring chord in the piano, heard as soft figuration immediately after the opening, acts as a type of refrain, binding the various sections together.

A line by the writer Nicholas Heiney (1982-2006), found shortly after the work's completion, sums up the mood of piece: 'Remember how the streets ring out for every soul that thought and felt and passed through them, in weakness and in strength'.

Night Paths has been recorded by Huw Wiggin with Noriko Ogawa on Orchid Classics.

Elegy, in memory of Steven Stucky

Steven Stucky (1949-2016) was one of the most highly-regarded US composers of his generation. He was also a revered teacher, whose generosity and wisdom shaped the lives of countless students over several decades. In the week following his death, the pianist Gloria Cheng asked a number of his former students and friends to compose a miniature for piano as an immediate response to Stucky's passing. This elegy is one such work, written as a simple and spontaneous expression of affection for a teacher whose music continues to have a profound influence.

String Quartet No. 1

Composed in 2014, this work marked the start of an ongoing and remarkably fruitful relationship with the Piatti Quartet (String Quartet No. 4, also commissioned by the Quartet, will receive its first performance at next year's Presteigne Festival). The work combines three different structures: five principal movements, four short duos (each using a different combination of the quartet), and three *cantos*, in which a lamenting viola melody is presented in different guises.

The first of the main movements is the most simple: soft, widely-spaced chords, perhaps reminiscent of a viol consort, support elegiac phrases in the first violin which grow in intensity as the movement unfolds,

with all four instruments coming to the fore during the coda. The second movement opens with the first *canto* (viola), before a fast and abrasive scherzo takes flight.

The first of the duos (violin and cello) then follows: a slow, meditative dialogue, with brief *pizzicato* interludes. After a fleeting, dance-like *pizzicato* third movement, the second duo (viola and violin) is heard, with two folk-inspired melodies presented in opposing metres. The fourth movement opens with a hushed reprise of the viola *canto*, but quickly segues into an agitated *fugato* which builds in intensity, before dovetailing into the third, frenetic duo (violins I and II). The final duo (viola and cello) is funereal in mood, and forms the final reprise of the viola's *canto*, now presented as sonorous, low chords. The last movement, a valedictory *Vocalise*, recalls the opening movement by way of its simple chordal accompaniment, with each instrument now assigned a melodic phrase.

This work was commissioned with the generous support of the Britten-Pears Foundation, Vaughan Williams Foundation, and a private benefactor. The work is dedicated jointly to the Piatti Quartet and Brian Keeble.

Cello Sonata

This 20-minute work was first performed by Guy Johnston and Tom Poster in 2021 to mark the 10th anniversary of the Hatfield House Chamber Music Festival. Although the opening *Prelude* is in sonata form, the work's overall structure might be said to resemble a suite, each movement of which is defined by a sharply different mood.

The *Prelude* combines urgency with lyricism, before dovetailing into *Threnody*, a song of mourning, whose impassioned melodic line alludes to vocal folk traditions of the Balkans. The fleeting *Soliloquy* that follows (for solo cello) precedes the heart of the work: *Ghost-dance*, the hushed opening of which slowly morphs into a 16th-century pavane by Anthony de Countie, favourite court lutenist of Elizabeth I, who spent much of her childhood at Hatfield House. An agitated *Notturmo* follows without a break, before the work closes on a note of resolution with *Vocalise*, which rises to the top of the cello's range.

This work was commissioned with the generous support of Penny Wright and Andrew Neubauer, together with Wigmore Hall, which hosted the London première. The work is dedicated to Guy Johnston, and composed in memory of Howard Delmonte.

© Joseph Phibbs 2023

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 7 October 2023

A Portrait of Joseph Phibbs

2.00pm

Piatti Quartet

Michael Trainor violin

Emily Holland violin

Miguel Sobrinho viola

Jessie Ann Richardson cello

Tim Lowe cello

Joseph Phibbs (b.1974)

String Quintet (2023) *world première*

Co-commissioned by the Piatti Quartet and Wigmore Hall, with additional support from Bob Boas and Tim Lowe.

*I. Triads. Adagio • II. Moto perpetuo. Molto allegro •
III. Notturmo. Very still • IV. Lumina. Lento e dolente –
Allegro – Lento*

Cantus, After Bach (2020)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

String Quintet in C D956 (1828)

*I. Allegro ma non troppo • II. Adagio •
III. Scherzo. Presto - Trio. Andante sostenuto •
IV. Allegretto*



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

String Quintet

The string quintet most commonly includes two violas, the six by Mozart being among the best known. Schubert's String Quintet D956 breaks this convention by adding an extra cello to the string quartet, resulting not only in greater lower resonance but also a shift in the ensemble's groupings: rather than the cello acting as the individual voice, surrounded by two violins and two violas, it is now the viola which takes on that role.

It is in the first movement of this short and often simple companion piece to Schubert's epic work that this aspect of the ensemble comes to the fore. Entitled *Triads*, the movement features duos for both pairs of instruments, these created out of common three-note chords. The viola emerges only later, as a contrasting - and, at times, competing - melodic voice.

The propulsive second movement (*Moto perpetuo*) focuses on a two-note melodic idea. This is shunted rapidly around the ensemble, always against a background of repeated notes. By contrast, the reflective slow *Notturmo* that follows is reduced to a simple, expansive melody, supported by harmonics, which rises and falls, before the arrival of a more impassioned middle section.

The final movement, *Lumina*, brings both cellos into the spotlight and echoes a recent work, *Flame and Shadow*, the expressive focus here being on light and shade. Although starting slowly, the movement quickly gains momentum, and is eventually transformed into an array of imitative textures, evocative perhaps of urban lights, with snatches of dance rhythms also in the mix. An exuberant reprise of the first movement brings the piece to a close.

This work was commissioned jointly by the Piatti Quartet and Wigmore Hall, with additional support from Bob Boas and Tim Lowe.

Cantus, After Bach

This arrangement for string quartet of a short vocal duet from *Christ lag in Todesbanden* BWV4 was made in 2020. It is drawn from the earliest surviving so-called chorale cantata by Bach, a form ideally suited to Bach's genius for contrapuntal invention: a single chorale melody permeates the entire cantata (which lasts some 20 minutes), appearing in a dizzying array of guises - some slow and fragmented, others faster and more decorative.

Here, the two voices are represented by the violins, which overlap and coalesce in an exquisite lamenting dialogue. The continuo part, a slow 'walking bass' underpinning the melodic texture throughout, is shared between the cello and viola, and played *pizzicato* throughout.

© Joseph Phibbs 2023

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.

Schubert String Quintet in C D956

Beethoven died in 1827. Schubert had visited him on his deathbed with a group of friends and was a torch-bearer at the funeral. 21 months later, on 19 November 1828, Schubert himself died, aged 31. In the months after Beethoven's death, he delivered an astonishing surge of music of incomparable range and spiritual force.

In early October 1828, six weeks before his death, Schubert alerted his publisher that he had written three piano sonatas, some Heine settings (later incorporated into *Schwanengesang*) and the String Quintet. He had performed the sonatas but he never heard the quintet, which had to wait a further 22 years for its first performance. He scored it for two violins, one viola and two cellos, rather than the more usual two violas and one cello. His decision made a big difference to ensemble possibilities, as well as types of sound and character. Just the first section of the first movement gives an idea of the work's scale, with what sounds like a slow introduction laying down the home key, then a confident C major passage that seems to want to do the conventional thing and move to G major. But a descending three-note hiatus on the two cellos acts like a set of railway points diverting the music to a different, alien key - in this case to E flat, which is remote in C major terms - before a brief, rather Mahlerian march-like episode delivers the exposition safely to the expected G major. But not for long. A simple dominant seventh chord sets off the volatile central development based on the march we have just heard. The movement is both dramatically succinct and thematically generous, and the scoring suggests orchestral possibilities - the cello doubling in the second subject and much pizzicato delicacy - in the hands of chamber-music intimacy.

The *Adagio* is set in E major, with the first violin's fractured cantilena hanging in the air, relying on the second cello's pizzicato pulse for a sense of momentum, with the middle voices musing on a chorale-like theme. In another semi-tonal shift, the dramatic middle movement moves to F minor dominated by a violent triplet figure, then is guided back via a version of the three-note descent to E major, with high violin and low cello in a beautifully elaborate variation. There is just as drastic a contrast of material in the *Scherzo*, its Beethovenian ebullience giving way, in another semi-tonal shift from C to D flat, to the strange *Andante sostenuto* Trio that expands the three-note tag as a threnody first heard in viola and cello. The finale is a sonata-rondo that offers *Zigeuner* bravura, Viennese lilt and a sensational, fast lap of honour to close. The last thing we hear is another semi-tone slip, a defiant D flat to C from all five instruments in unison.

© Peter Reed 2023

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.