

WIGMORE HALL

Tuesday 8 July 2025
7.30pm

12 Ensemble

Eloisa-Fleur Thom violin I
Juliette Roos violin I
Yume Fujise violin I
David López Ibáñez violin I
Roberto Ruisi violin II
Oliver Cave violin II
Will Newell violin II
Xander Croft violin II
Luba Tunnicliffe viola
Miguel Sobrinho viola

Alinka Rowe viola
Inis Oírr Asano viola
Max Ruisi cello
Sergio Serra cello
Felix Hughes cello
Toby Hughes bass
Nathan Knight bass
Henry Roberts flute
Fred Paixao flute
Chris Cowie oboe

Alasdair Hill oboe
Max Welford clarinet
Cara Doyle clarinet
Ashley Myall bassoon
Richard Bayliss horn
Kate Hairnswoth horn
Adam Chatterton trumpet
Rebecca Crawshaw trumpet
Benny Vernonb trombone
Olivia Jageurs harp

Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928-2016)

Melankolia from *Cantus Arcticus* (Concerto for birds and orchestra) Op. 61 (1972)

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Concerto in D (1946)

I. Vivace • II. Arioso: Andantino • III. Rondo: Allegro

Isabella Gellis (b.1997)

Many Fruited Dog Tooth (2025) *world première*

Kindly supported by the Vaughan Williams Foundation

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

Prière du Christ montant vers son Père from *L'Ascension* (1932-4)

Interval

Rudolf Barshai (b.1924)

Petite symphonie à cordes (after Ravel's String Quartet in F) (2003)

I. Allegro moderato, très doux • II. Assez vif, très rythmé • III. Très lent • IV. Vif et agité

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12 Ensemble combines the intimacy and intricacy of a chamber ensemble with the timbre, colour and contrast of a string orchestra, affording a unique perspective on its repertoire. This programme exemplifies its approach in a journey through the 20th and into the 21st Century that explores themes of movement and lyricism.

'Melankolia' is the 2nd movement of **Rautavaara's** 1972 *Cantus Arcticus*. Although commissioned by Oulu University for orchestra and choir, Rautavaara apparently added birdsong to the piece after the chosen choir did not meet his expectations; the birds on tape (from the composer's recordings made in the Arctic Circle, the marshlands of Liminka and from the Finnish radio archive) become their own choir. The movement opens with the sounds of the birds in stereo dialogue; the sound of the Shore Lark has been transposed down by two octaves to create what the composer called a 'ghost bird'. The strings follow in rising and falling swooping gestures based around A minor. These are layered throughout the ensemble as the music climbs in tessitura and in dynamic, creating a climax of the birds swooping overhead.

Stravinsky's Concerto in D, sometimes referred to as his 'Basele' Concerto, was commissioned by Paul Sacher for the 20th anniversary of the Basel Chamber Orchestra. Composed in 1946, following Stravinsky's naturalisation as an American citizen, the concerto is often said to reflect his new home in Hollywood and the music of the film industry. In three movements, the concerto displays Stravinsky's deep knowledge of strings, deploying a range of techniques to achieve a variety of colour and ideas, even on the level of each note. The piece opens with striding tones, frenetic movement and shifts of tempo and colour; the parts often move together, creating close harmonies. The second movement begins with a four-rhythm, and a lyrical melody that is interrupted through changes of metre – giving the sense of dancers moving and changing direction – while the third movement again takes up urgency and action, combining rhythmic and lyrical elements from the previous two movements. Different aspects of technique, melody and rhythm create a complex and rich texture that builds in momentum through ensemble movement to a moment of dramatic punctuation.

'The Prayer of Christ ascending toward His Father' is the final movement of **Messiaen's** 1932-33 suite that contemplates Christ's ascension into Heaven. It is more common to hear the composer's 1934 organ transcription, often accompanied by a quotation from Christ's prayer for his disciples from John 17: 'And

now, O Father, I have manifested Thy name unto men⁶...now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world and I come to Thee¹¹.' In the orchestral, and original, version of the piece, this movement employs a slowly moving series of harmonies in the strings that climb and fall. The strings also demonstrate the purity of the moment, while full range of the ensemble is used to figuratively convey the events upon which the music meditates.

Petite symphonie à cordes is Russian conductor **Rudolph Barshai's** 2003 arrangement of Ravel's string quartet for small string orchestra. Originally composed in 1903, and dedicated to Ravel's teacher Gabriel Fauré, part of the novelty of the work is that each movement at times recalls its opening theme. The piece introduces constant surprise and interest through changes of tempo, mood and harmony; advocates and critics both heard a panoply of references in the music to Debussy, Mozart, Ravel's Spanish heritage and to Gamelan music (which Ravel had heard in Paris). The first movement, *Allegro Moderato*, introduces two themes and develops them in contrast to each other while the second movement, *assez vif*, is a scherzo; in its *trés rythmé* section the opening theme is recalled in the ensemble texture. The third movement is contemplative, and marked *trés lent*, with its theme beginning lower in the viola. Despite the marking, this movement is again a journey through a variety of energies, still recalling the melody of the first. The final movement, *vif et agité*, makes use of changes of time, tempo and pace in a dramatic awakening from the previous contemplative journey, here again recalling the music's opening theme in moments of calm amid the vigorous succession of musical materials.

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Many Fruited Dog Tooth [Cynodontium polycarpon] is the name of a moss native to Britain. I love all that this name implies: sharp and soft, blooming but also decaying, sounds that cling, embedded rootlessness. I imagine this music as an encounter with something that has already existed for a long time and will continue to do so once you stop listening.

This is the third piece in a series of works that share names with mosses – the other two are *Lurid Cupola Moss* (string trio) and *Rusty Swan Neck Moss* (solo cello).

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