

# WIGMORE HALL

Thursday 9 December 2021 1.00pm

## Ruisi Quartet

Alessandro Ruisi violin

Oliver Cave violin

Luba Tunnicliffe viola

Max Ruisi cello



Supported by CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust

**Matthew Locke** (c.1621-1677)

Fantasia in F

**Joseph Haydn** (1732-1809)

String Quartet in D minor Op. 9 No. 4 (?1769-70)

*I. Allegro moderato • II. Menuetto • III. Adagio cantabile •  
IV. Finale. Presto*

**Oliver Leith** (b.1990)

A Different Fantasy (after Locke) (2021)

The Big House (2021) *world première*

### Welcome back to Wigmore Hall

We are grateful to our Friends and donors for their generosity as we rebuild a full series of concerts in 2021/22 and reinforce our efforts to reach audiences everywhere through our broadcasts. To help us present inspirational concerts and support our community of artists, please make a donation by visiting our website:

[Wigmore-hall.org.uk/donate](https://www.wigmore-hall.org.uk/donate). Every gift is making a difference. Thank you.

*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](https://www.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



'Mathew Lock / 1638', carved on the organ screen of Exeter Cathedral, is one of the few concrete traces of the early life of composer **Matthew Locke** (c.1621-1677). He trained as a chorister and subsequently joined the court of Charles I, travelling with the King to the Netherlands, which may have been where he converted to Catholicism. After a period in Hereford, Locke became active in London in the late 1650s, composing music for theatrical entertainments and a great deal of consort music: suites for stringed instruments (viols or violins) designed to be played in domestic settings. Fantasias featured often, their relatively free form allowing Locke to demonstrate his command of counterpoint and harmonic invention.

From 1660, when he was appointed composer to the Private Music, until the end of his life, Locke held prestigious musical appointments at court. (His Catholicism prohibited him from being a member of the Chapel Royal, but not from writing sacred music for it.) He composed for the Broken Consort, an ensemble that mixed viols, violins and continuo (keyboard) instruments, and also for the court violin band, the 24 Violins. Henry Purcell was sworn in as composer of the 24 Violins shortly after Locke's death. In homage to the most acclaimed musician of Restoration England, Purcell wrote an elegiac ode, *What hope for us remains now he is gone?*, which celebrated Locke's 'skilful harmony'.

It is difficult to trace a consistent path from the string music of the 17th Century through to what is recognisably the classical string quartet. Gradually, the continuo that had been part of the 'broken consort' was abandoned and by the mid-18th Century continental European composers were producing repertoire for two violins, viola and cello. Yet there were still varying numbers and types of movements and the word 'symphony' was used to describe the ensemble as often as 'quartet'. Austrian composer **Joseph Haydn** (1732-1809) became known for his 'divertimentos', as they were often called, which were composed singly but published in groups. He began composing sets of string quartets with his Op. 9, around 1769. He established some important principles in this larger grouping of works: each quartet in the set would be in a different key and they all consisted of four movements, with two outer fast movements, a minuet (usually in second place) and a slow movement. The first movement was usually in sonata form, with two themes presented in the exposition, material from which is developed before the opening returns, now geared towards closing the movement.

What is known as Op. 9 No. 4 was probably composed first in the set. It is also Haydn's first quartet in a minor key. It demonstrates Haydn's early appreciation of the ensemble's range of available timbres. All instruments begin in a relatively low register that, as musicologist Nancy November has pointed out, emphasises a 'sense of heavy-hearted brooding and eccentricity' in keeping with Haydn's and his contemporaries' association of minor keys with melancholy. Haydn also uses changes in register and timbre to emphasise

important moments in the musical structure. For instance, the cello dramatically descends to its lowest open string to swerve into the recapitulation of the opening theme in the first movement. And in the wistful minor-key *Menuetto*, the Trio unusually is played only by the two violins, with the first thickening the texture with double-stopped chords. By the last two movements the first violin has ascended to its habitual higher registers, singing above the rolling phrases of the other members of the quartet in the B flat major *Adagio cantabile*, and bouncing through the imitative part-writing of the determinedly D minor finale. The florid and lyrical violin writing probably reflects the skills of Luigi Tomasini, leader of the court orchestra at Esterházy for whom Haydn also wrote a number of violin concertos.

London-based composer **Oliver Leith** is currently Guildhall School of Music & Drama's Doctoral-Composer-in-Residence at the Royal Opera House; his new opera will be premièred at Covent Garden in 2022. His music has been performed, recorded and broadcast by major ensembles, from the London Symphony Orchestra to Apartment House. The members of the Ruisi Quartet are long-term collaborators as part of the acclaimed new music group 12 Ensemble, who premièred Leith's Ivor-Novello-award-winning *Honey Siren* (2020).

Leith takes Locke's *Fantasia* as the starting point for his *A Different Fantasy*, commissioned by the Ruisi Quartet and premièred at the Lake District Summer Music festival in summer 2021. Leith describes the piece as a 'slippy arrangement'; Locke's intricate part-writing becomes increasingly woozily remembered but no less beautiful.

The world première on this programme, *Big House*, also engages with the past in evocative ways. Simon Marsden's photographs of 'once great' houses caught Leith's imagination. The music seems to take a tour of the rooms of a grand old country home, now deserted, its spent splendour grown over with ivy. Something new and old is discovered at every turn. The full title reads: *The big house, pomegranate, blue bottles, sunshine choir, cornicing, home chapel organ, fish eggs and wine*.

That grand old country house might also be thought of as the history of the string quartet. Leith again explores its corners, with ghosts of past pieces haunting the harmonies and articulations. The use of glissandi and microtonally adjusted tuning frays the edges of the repurposed musical gestures and makes the tonal colours seem simultaneously saturated with the light of another time and faded, as if looking at an old polaroid photograph. Though tinged with melancholy there is no irony here, but great affection for the past. Leith compares it to a wake for what we love. *What hope for us remains now it is gone?* Plenty.

© Laura Tunbridge 2021

*Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.*