

# WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 9 October 2024  
7.30pm

Composer in Residence is supported by Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne

Caroline Shaw composer, singer

Kamus String Quartet

Terhi Paldanius violin  
Jukka Untamala violin  
Jussi Tuhkanen viola  
Petja Kainulainen cello

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

Moss from *The Evergreen* (2020)

Josquin des Prez (c.1450-1521)

Nymphes des bois

Caroline Shaw

Cant voi l'aube (2016)  
Stem from *The Evergreen*

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725)

Sonata a quattro No. 1 in F minor (pub. c. 1740)  
*I. Grave • II. Allegro • III. Larghetto • IV. Allemanda*

Caroline Shaw

Entr'acte (2011)  
Will there be any Stars in my Crown from *By and By* (2010)

*Interval*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

La Malinconia. Adagio – Allegretto quasi Allegro from  
String Quartet No. 6 in B flat Op. 18 No. 6 (1798-1800)

Caroline Shaw

Blueprint (2016)  
Water from *The Evergreen*  
And So (2018)  
Root from *The Evergreen*  
Other Song (2020)

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Prominent among the third generation of New York minimalists, **Caroline Shaw** is not only a composer but also a violinist/violist and singer, which must partly explain her frequent recourse to the two genres represented this evening: string quartet and song. The general interests she brings to bear on her music range from the arboreal to the architectural, the former written into her most recent quartet, *The Evergreen*, which we visit in stages.

She has recalled how the work came about: 'One day in January 2020, I took a walk in an evergreen forest on Swiikw (Galiano Island), British Columbia, Canada. I found myself slowing down. Eventually I stopped moving altogether.

*The Evergreen* is my offering to one particular tree in that forest. This tree is towering, craggy, warped and knotted, wrapped in soft green. To be honest, I'm not entirely sure that it's still alive, or that it's not actually an ancient deciduous tree that has tacitly agreed to be covered in moss. But still, it feels like an evergreen friend, and so I wrote some music for it - for the soft moss that covers it, for its strong stem that reaches up, for the gentle chaos of dripping water that surrounds it, and for the roots below, ever seeking and nourishing and building.' Here the composer sketches the four movements of the quartet she wrote later the same year. Its first movement, *Moss*, comes out of nowhere and reveals itself in shivering repetitions, mossy. A strong theme emerges, and the music vanishes again into the upper air and silence.

The woodland theme continues a little, however, into the first song, 'Nymphes des bois', **Josquin des Prez's** lament on the death, in 1497, of Johannes Ockeghem, who may have taught him and certainly influenced him. In five parts, the lament allows performance by solo voice and string quartet. Like many polyphonic compositions of its period and later, it is in two sections, of which the first honours the departed composer in imitating his interweaving of voices that are melodically unlike and sombre, not bright and similar, as in Josquin's style. In the second section Josquin places himself among other composers mourning the master: Antoine Brumel, Pierre de la Rue and Loyset Compère. Going back a further three centuries, 'Cant voi l'aube' has words attributed to Gace Brulé, a musician-poet from around 1200, whose original setting has not survived. The text belongs to a medieval type: the morning song, voiced by one or other of a pair of illicit lovers who at daybreak must separate. 'I decided', Shaw notes of her 2016 resetting, 'to carve out a new song with a more modern contour.' We return to *The Evergreen* for *Stem*, where slides and twists around a unison (the seed?) burst into strength.

Then we go back again, just three centuries this time, to a page from the early history of the string quartet: the first of four sonatas **Alessandro Scarlatti**

produced, probably in his last decade. Heard in this context, we might find that the senior Scarlatti's slow introduction bends and grows as much as *Stem*. Following the form of a church sonata, in four short movements, the work goes on to a nimble fugue, a slow movement contemplating a short theme, and a courtly dance.

Caroline Shaw takes over again with an early quartet of hers, *Entr'acte* (2011), a single movement playing for 11 minutes. It takes a little further the change-and-return routine of the classical minuet and trio (Shaw was thinking in particular of Haydn's Op. 77 quartets), music that 'suddenly takes you to the other side of Alice's looking glass, in a kind of absurd, subtle, technicolor transition'. After this comes another song, from the cycle *By and By* (2010), in which Shaw resets a Baptist hymn (melody by John Robson Sweeney, words by Eliza Edmunds Hewitt): 'Will there be any Stars in my Crown?'

The second half begins with **Beethoven**: the finale from his Op. 18 No. 6 quartet, chosen for a reason that will emerge. Headed 'Melancholy', the movement opens with searching chromatic music, out of which spins a dance. However, this does not go on as a conventional allegro emerging from a slow introduction, for the slow music is recalled more than once, as the question to which the dance both is and is not the answer. In its oddity, and at the same time its directness, the music foreshadows what was to come a quarter-century later, in the quartets of the composer's last years. Here the movement is partnered with a Shaw piece of comparable length, *Blueprint* (2016), which, to continue in her words, 'takes its title from the beautiful blue woodblock printing tradition of Japan as well as from the familiar standard architectural representation of a proposed structure.

'The piece began its life as a harmonic reduction - a kind of floor plan - of Beethoven's Op. 18 No. 6, which, as a violinist and violist, I have played many times. Chamber music is ultimately about conversation without words. *Blueprint* is also a conversation - with Beethoven, with Haydn (his teacher and the 'father' of the string quartet), and with the joys and *malinconia* of his Op. 18 No. 6.' The Kamus then completes *The Evergreen* with *Water*, dripping at increasing speed, and *Root*, which of course the cello finds, to introduce what is the work's longest movement. Songs punctuate. In 'And So' (2018), the last of three numbers commissioned by Anne Sofie von Otter, Shaw riffs on Gertrude Stein's riff on Robert Burns and adds touches from Billy Joel's song 'And So it Goes'. 'Other Song' (2020) is a song that seems to be singing about itself. But also so much else.

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**Caroline Shaw** (b.1982)

**Moss from *The Evergreen*** (2020)

**Josquin des Prez** (c.1450-1521)

**Nymphes des bois**

*Jean Molinet*

**Nymphs of the woods**

Nymphes des bois, déeses des fontaines, Chantres experts de toutes nations, Changez voz voix fort clères et haultaines En cris tranchantz et lamentations. Car d'Atropos tres terrible satrape Vostr'Okeghem a trape en sa trape, Le vray trésor de musique'et chief d'œuvre, (Qui de trépas désormais plus n'eschappe,) Dont grant doumaige'est que la terre coœuvre. Acoutez vous d'abitiz de deuil, Josquin, Perchon, Brumel, Compère, Et plorez grosses larmes d'œil; Perdu avez vostre bon père.	Nymphs of the woods, goddesses of the fountains singers renowned across all nations, turn your voices most clear and high to piercing cries and laments. Because Atropos, the terrible satrap, Has caught your Okeghem in her trap, the true treasure and masterpiece of music, (who from death no longer escapes,) for whom great mourning covers the earth. Put on your clothes of mourning, Josquin, Perchon, Brumel, Compère, and weep great tears from your eyes; you have lost your good father.
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REQUIESCAT IN PACE.  
AMEN.

MAY HE REST IN PEACE.  
AMEN.

Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine Et lux perpetua luceat eis.	Give them eternal rest, Lord, and let perpetual light shine on them.
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**Caroline Shaw**

**Cant voi l'aube** (2016)

*attr. Gace Brulé*

**When I see the dawn**

Cant voi l'aube dou jor venir, Nulle rien ne doi tant haïr, K'elle fait de moi departir Mon amin, cui j'ain per amors.	When I see the coming of dawn, there's nothing I must hate so much, for it makes me leave my friend, whom I truly love.
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Or ne hai riens tant com le jour,	I hate nothing as much as day,
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Amins, ke me depart de vos.	my love, which parts me from you.
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Je ne vos puis de jor veoir, Car trop redout l'apercevoir, Et se vos di trestout por voir K'en agait sont li enuious.	I can't see you in the daytime, for fear we'll be noticed, and this I tell you truly: the envious are watching us.
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Or ne hai riens tant com le jour, Amins, ke me depart de vos.	I hate nothing as much as day, my love, which parts me from you.
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Quant je me gix dedens mon lit Et je resgairde encoste mi, Je n'i truis poent de mon amin, Se m' en plaing a fins amerous.	When I lie in my bed, and look to my side, I find no trace of my belovèd, and so I complain to true lovers.
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Biaus dous amis, vos en ireis, A Deu soit vos cors comandais. Por Deu vos pri, ne m'oblieis! Je n' ain nulle rien com vos.	Beautiful, sweet love, you will leave. May God watch over your body. By God I beg you, don't forget me! I love nothing so much as you.
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Or ne hai riens tant com le jour, Amins, ke me depart de vos.	I hate nothing as much as day, my love, which parts me from you.
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**Stem from *The Evergreen***

**Alessandro Scarlatti** (1660-1725)

**Sonata a quattro No. 1 in F minor** (pub. c.  
1740)

**I. Grave**

**II. Allegro**

**III. Larghetto**

**IV. Allemanda**

*Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.*

## Caroline Shaw

Entr'acte (2011)

### Will there be any Stars in my Crown from By and By (2010)

*Eliza Edmunds Hewitt*

I am thinking today of that beautiful land  
I shall reach when the sun goeth down  
When through wonderful grace by my Savior I stand  
Will there be any stars in my crown

Will there be any stars, any stars in my crown  
When at evening the sun goeth down  
When I wake with the blest in those mansions of rest  
Will there be any stars in my crown

In the strength of the Lord let me labor and pray  
Let me watch as a winner of souls  
That bright stars may be mine in the glorious day  
Will there be any stars in my crown

O what joy it will be when His face I behold  
Living gems at His feet to lay down  
It would sweeten my bliss in the city of gold  
Should there be any stars in my crown

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## Interval

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## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

### La Malinconia. Adagio – Allegretto quasi Allegro from *String Quartet No. 6 in B flat* Op. 18 No. 6 (1798-1800)

## Caroline Shaw

Blueprint (2016)

### Water from *The Evergreen*

And So (2018)

*Caroline Shaw, after Robert Burns, Gertrude Stein,  
Billy Joel and William Shakespeare*

would a song by another name  
sound as sweet and true  
would all the reds be just the same  
or violets as blue  
if you were gone would words still flow  
and would they rhyme with you  
if you were gone would i still know  
how to love and how to grow  
and how the vowel threads through.

and so they say the saying goes  
a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose is  
a tired rhyme  
but in the verse there's always time.

would scansion cease to mark the beats  
if i went away  
would a syllable interrupt the feet  
of tetrametric iambs  
when i am gone  
listen  
and i will sing a tune of love and life and of the  
ocean's prose and the poetry of a  
red,  
red,  
rose,  
that's newly sprung in june.

and so you say the saying goes  
a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose  
is a rose  
is a rose  
is how I'm  
keeping track of time.

when a' the seas rise high, my dear  
and the rocks melt with the sun  
will the memory of us  
still rhyme with anyone  
will we still tune our violins  
will we still sing of roses  
will we exist at all, my love,  
or will we fade to stanzas of  
the dust that i suppose is  
all we were and all we'll be.

and so the saying 'so it goes'  
depends a lot on if a rose is a rose is a rose is rose is  
a rose  
is a rose is a rose is a thing sublime  
and so we stay, on borrowed time.

### Root from *The Evergreen*

Other Song (2020)