WIGMORE HALL

The Score

2024 AUTUMN ISSUE

COMPOSER CAROLINE SHAW AND GUITARIST SEAN SHIBE ON THEIR RESIDENCIES, JOYCE DIDONATO ON WINTERREISE, WILLIAM CHRISTIE AT 80 AND THE NASH ENSEMBLE AT 60, THE OVERLOOKED SCARLATTI

Welcome

Helen Hawkins © Andrew Ward

Helen Hawkins
Editor of *The Score* magazine

A warm welcome to the latest issue of *The Score*, and to the spring season's rich roster of must-see recitals.

Top of many wish lists will be Joyce DiDonato's *Winterreise* with pianist Maxim Emelyanychev. The American mezzo explains why she will be performing Schubert's song cycle from the Mädchen's point of view.

There are two exciting residencies: the American vocalist and composer Caroline Shaw, for whom everyday life is a constant source of inspiration, from its sounds and sights to its sensory delights; and the extraordinary guitarist Sean Shibe, a virtuoso intent on bringing as wide a range of people as possible to the Hall for the first time.

How Wigmore Hall builds new audiences is itself under scrutiny. I report on its Under 35s scheme, which gives younger music fans access for £5 a ticket. And the Hall's Impact Report provides a striking snapshot of how your donations keep the concerts coming.

We also have birthdays to celebrate. Amelia Freedman recalls how the Nash Ensemble was conceived – in a pub – 60 years ago. And William Christie will be fêted on his 80th birthday, before an audience he rates as 'the best in the world'. Cheers, William!

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Caroline Shaw © Dayna Szyndrowski

A happy return to the Hall

BY RACHEL HALLIBURTON

William Christie is looking forward to his 80th birthday concert with 'one of the best audiences in the world'.

'Are they compatible bedfellows?' There's a lightning flicker of scepticism in William Christie's voice. He's considering the dispute that erupted between Lully and Rameau's admirers after Rameau composed his first opera, *Hippolyte et Aricie*, in 1733.

The controversy about Rameau's stylistic innovations was so fiery – despite the fact that Lully was dead – that one side was called *Lullistes* and the opposite side, in a striking echo of recent political divisions, *Ramoneurs*. (In this case, the word meant 'chimney sweeps', rather than regretful Europhiles.) Christie, arguably Rameau's most influential champion of the last 50 years, declares that 'for some he was too flagrantly colourful and inventive'. From Christie's perspective, the Frenchman was 'wildly musical. Was he as good as Bach and Handel? Absolutely.'

Christie is speaking to me on the phone from Torroella de Montgrí in Spain. Despite having a tight schedule in Paris, he has popped across the border to fit in another performance at the festival there. In his 80th year he maintains a Stakhanovite routine; 'Though I sometimes get tired I never get tired making music,' he asserts. He has a reputation for being severe with interviewers, but when we speak it's his questing, agile, almost playful intellect that predominates, whether he's talking about Louis XIV, gardening or his love of Duke Ellington.

A few months before the interview, *Le Figaro* described Christie as 'le plus français des américains' (the most French of Americans) and the programme at Wigmore Hall to mark his 80th year certainly reflects that. Eighteenth-century French fashionistas might have been horrified, but Lully and Rameau feature together, as well as Charpentier, who wrote the chamber opera *Les arts florissants* that directly inspired the name of Christie's ensemble.

Though Christie would no doubt have been a *Ramoneur* in 1733, he argues that, as the creator of French-style opera, Lully had that alchemical moment 'when he grafted the Italian musical tradition onto French theatre'. Some years ago he told a journalist about the 'intense sense of communication and bonding' he felt when he first heard Baroque music as a child; today it's clear that his passion is every bit as powerful.

His vision for Les Arts Florissants – which he established in 1979 after leaving America in protest against the Vietnam War in 1971 – evolved when none of the composers on this

William Christie © Oscar Ortega

He declares that he sees Wigmore Hall as 'Valhalla'. What better place for a warrior against intellectual laziness and complacency to celebrate his 80th birthday?

Wigmore programme were considered an essential part of the repertoire. His assiduous rebuilding of their reputations has seen him awarded several honorary doctorates as well as being given the Grand Croix of the Légion d'Honneur – the highest order of merit bestowed by the French state. Now, he says, he's most proud of 'giving music that was perceived to have no eloquence before an eloquence'. He continues wrily: 'I came into a world where there were the beginnings of historical performance practice,' in which too many, in his view, 'were playing Bach when they were thinking of something they liked better'.

Today he knows he's been key in establishing an infinitely more fertile landscape for historically informed performance. Though he still has his cavils, not least about 'the Tarzan conductor who swings down on a vine to conduct 120 musicians who don't really know him'. Gleefully he continues: 'He deploys a whole calisthenic regime of movement as he attempts to control the orchestra. Yet this overcontrol is not necessary – if you give a moderate-sized orchestra independence, liberty, you can find yourself in a musical world that is far more interesting.'

The Tarzan conductor, of course, is the antithesis to how Christie himself operates. Spontaneity, energy and freshness are his watchwords, though the paradox is that these qualities come from decades of rigorous interrogation of the Baroque tradition. 'I think the key to Baroque music is understanding that there were many virtuosos operating in these ensembles,' he explains. 'Musicians who understood that much of the music was composed quickly and required improvisation. A good Baroque musician is like a jazz musician operating under Duke Ellington'.

I put it to Christie that Lully, Rameau and Charpentier composed during the reign of Louis XIV, a moment of supreme cultural confidence in which it seemed unimaginable that any of them might become underdogs. While he himself has used the term 'championing the underdog' for what he's done, today he's in more horticultural mode as is perhaps fitting for a musician who's also celebrated for his meticulously designed Thiré gardens in La Vendée. 'Some composers become like plants that pass their heyday and are considered to be weeds,' he says. 'They're cast aside, but at a later point someone else can plant the seeds and nurture them so they flourish.'

Forming an ensemble that's tuned into the improvisatory nature of Baroque has been central to his bringing new life to the repertoire. 'A score by Boulez is complete and deliberately so,' he declares. 'With him a musician follows instructions. But Baroque scores are left to be completed by the musicians. I now have performers who can do that, and I think they're some of the best in the world. It's taken time to build that up.'

Christie has revelled in more unpredictable partnerships too. Far from acting like the guardian of some sacred flame of historically informed performance, he has enthusiastically collaborated with former experimental dance group La La La Human Steps and recently presided over Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* with hip hop dancers. Despite his previous skewering of Pierre Boulez's reputation, he tells me he's an 'ardent admirer' of his music. It seems, unsurprisingly, that he feels a kinship with disruptors and experimenters. He, similarly, has achieved his reputation by being utterly uncompromising about his vision.

William Christie © Vincent Pontet

It feels appropriate, then, when he declares that he sees Wigmore Hall as 'Valhalla'. What better place for a warrior against intellectual laziness and complacency to celebrate his 80th birthday? 'I think it's going to be a joyous event,' he declares with scabrous relish. 'It's probably one of the best musical audiences in the world.'

Forthcoming Concert:
TUE 11 FEB 2025, 7.30PM

How to give Schubert a feminine touch

BY JESSICA DUCHEN

Joyce DiDonato has a new perspective on *Winterreise*. She explains why she and pianist Maxim Emelyanychev will be exploring the young woman's emotions.

Franz Schubert's *Winterreise* is one of the greatest challenges in any Lieder singer's repertoire. With its youthful protagonist, devastated by a broken romance, who walks out into the winter night to face gradual mental disintegration, the bleak 1827 song cycle alarmed Schubert's friends when he first played it to them; his spare, concentrated writing loads every note with meaning.

Add to this the fact that it is usually sung by a male performer, and the task ahead of the great mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato as she brings it to Wigmore Hall assumes still more substantial proportions. She is no stranger to the work, having already recorded it with Yannick Nézet-Séguin at the piano; neither is she the first woman to sing it, as it has been triumphantly performed by others including Brigitte Fassbaender and Alice Coote. At Wigmore Hall, however, where she is partnered by Maxim Emelyanychev, the intimate setting offers her audience a chance to appreciate at close quarters her radically new interpretation.

DiDonato had never considered tackling this work until Nezet-Séguin put the idea to her. 'It took me completely by surprise,' she says. 'Until that point, the idea of my performing *Winterreise* was unthinkable to me. He defended his proposal by explaining that he hoped to perform Mahler with me one day, and that he viewed Schubert as being an important doorway to his great works. I resisted at first, knowing that to truly enter the complex world of *Winterreise*, one needs to be completely immersed in each staggering yet simple detail of the piece.

'I struggled to find a personal entry point until one phrase leapt out at me: "Das Mädchen sprach von Liebe … ". Coincidentally I was singing Charlotte [in Massenet's *Werther*] at the Royal Opera House at the same time, and as the curtain would fall, Werther lying dead in my arms, I would think to myself, "Now where do I go? Now what do I do?" I was curious to imagine what Charlotte's next step in life would be.

'That same curiosity arose around this Mädchen. What did she think when she saw "Gute Nacht" etched into the gate? What became of her? That was the exhilarating pivot point for me to dive completely into this world and find the journey I now needed to take.'

The result is *Winterreise* almost as an epistolary novel. 'As I began to think and

Joyce DiDonato © Salva Lopez

question more and more about her – of whom we know virtually nothing – I couldn't stop experiencing the journey through her point of view, and I was desperate to understand her story. After all, if she spoke of love, in particular at that time, his abandonment must have affected her tremendously.

'I imagine he sent her his journal in the post. Each word remains intact and from his point of view – and yet she is reading them, as Charlotte read Werther's letters. Perhaps she's reading the journal for the first time, or maybe she reads it ceremoniously each year on the anniversary of their first meeting. But she has dutifully kept it, and as she reads his words, she takes her own journey alongside his.

'Did he know she would read his every word and write it accordingly? Did he send it out of impulse, needing to share his deepest thoughts? Was it a kind of suicide note? The possibility of interpreting the journey from his point of view is still completely intact. What we get by bringing in her experience, however, is a parallel journey as she fights with her reactions to his leaving, his love, his sorrow…'

She came up against one stumbling block at first: the final song. 'I couldn't understand how to reconcile *Die Leiermann* with this idea of his journal. But I continued to sit with the possibility it could still work. It wasn't until my first rehearsal with Yannick that, when

Joyce DiDonato
© Salva Lopez

Maxim Emelyanychev © Andrej Grilc

we arrived at that piece, every hair stood on end for me. I understood completely: in my version, his written journal ends with No. 23, *Die Nebensonnen*. That is his last entry. This time, as she closes the journal, it is *her* encounter with the Organ Grinder that we witness. So the questions of survival, the forceful pull of death, this exists for both of these protagonists at the same time.'

Besides making sense of the drama sung by a woman, DiDonato says that this interpretation also gives her greater freedom vocally. 'I think it's wonderful for women to sing this cycle, without question. What I have found, personally, in approaching this as the girl herself, is that I feel no hesitation in being entirely feminine. Often this will come in on repeated phrases: the first time I sing a phrase, I am reading, encountering his words, but the repeat is something I get to internalise as the girl.'

She and her pianist – the versatile conductor and pianist Maxim Emelyanychev, with whose Baroque ensemble il Pomo d'Oro she has performed – are very much on the same page of their protagonist's book.

'This idea is just great,' Emelyanychev enthuses, 'because it makes complete sense. The "letters" become songs, which creates many double meanings in the text, and there are so few notes that it becomes incredibly intense through those double meanings. It is also even darker – because all of this has happened in the past.' So something has happened to the person writing the letters or journal? 'Yes – and you have the answer only in the last song.'

He and DiDonato have now performed *Winterreise* several times. 'Accompanying Lieder, because it's just two of you, it's so easy to react to one another,' he says. 'When we rehearse, we don't say, "Can we take it faster or slower, louder or softer?" We just play music and understand each other. And when you have such an artist as Joyce, you always can learn so much – because the voice is a perfect instrument. It's the best kind of partnership when people can collaborate without words.'

Forthcoming Concert:
FRI 28 MAR 2025, 7.30PM

‘There is nothing I can't translate into music’

BY CORY OLDWEILER

Caroline Shaw is truly a Renaissance musician. Not in the sense that she played the lute and wrote motets in 15th-century Italy, but in terms of her seemingly boundless diversity and curiosity as a performer and composer.

Born in North Carolina in the early 1990s, Shaw can now be found both in a concert hall providing vocal accompaniment to a string quartet and on a festival stage as one half of Ringdown, the ‘electronic cinematic pop duo’ she formed with her partner Danni Lee shortly after the pandemic.

She’s written Brahmsian orchestral works like *The Observatory*, commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 2019, and minimalist music for cello, piano and voice such as *The Wheel*, developed with the French collective I Giardini in 2021. She’s composed scores for television series, feature films and documentaries, including the forthcoming Ken Burns film about Leonardo da Vinci. She’s written for Anne Sofie von Otter and Yo-Yo Ma. She’s seen her work performed at the BBC Proms and on tour with Beyoncé, and won four Grammys and a Pulitzer.

Shaw talked to me from her home in Portland, Oregon, her ostensible ‘getting away from it all’ location, as opposed to the relative chaos of New York City, where she splits her time when not travelling for work. She was ‘working on a bunch of things that are overdue’, but generously discussed her approach to her career and her upcoming residency at Wigmore Hall, which will feature three appearances, including two commissions.

Music has been a constant in Shaw’s life, starting as a performer. She began playing violin at the age of two, thanks to her mother, who taught the Suzuki method, and sang in the local Episcopal church choir as a youth. She studied violin as an undergraduate and for her master’s degree, before enrolling in the doctoral composition program at Princeton in 2010. Three years later, she became the youngest winner of the Pulitzer in Music, for her *Partita for 8 Voices*, written for Roomful of Teeth, a vocal ensemble she joined in 2009. (It’s the striking theme music to the 2022 BBC TV drama *Marriage*.)

Prior to the award, she thought of herself primarily as a performer. ‘People didn’t know I wrote music, so there was not a lot of expectation, which was incredibly freeing.’ The recognition changed everything. ‘I do a lot more composing, and that takes most of my time. I guess that has taken some primacy, but I couldn’t have one without the other.’

Collages by Lisa Melkumov

Shaw is as collaborative a composer as she is a performer, valuing what she calls the ‘serendipity of strangers’, because of the way an individual performer or singer can inspire her. Losing that interactive element of art during the pandemic didn’t stop her output, but it did sap her motivation at times. ‘I had the “why?” question a lot more.’ She admits the doubt never really goes away, ‘but when there’s active performing or there’s people around, it’s a way underneath all of that’.

Even on her own, Shaw has an innate ability to draw inspiration from anything around her, having composed based on things she has eaten, read, written, felt or imagined. ‘I always say that there’s nothing I couldn’t possibly translate into music.’ Whether or not it’s successful or true, she isn’t the one to say, but that’s not necessarily the point. ‘It’s like a wonderful translation process where you don’t necessarily need to get it correct.’

Shaw has an innate ability to draw inspiration from anything around her, having composed based on things she has eaten, read, written, felt or imagined. ‘I always say that there’s nothing I couldn’t possibly translate into music.’

For the first of her three Wigmore Hall concerts, on 9 October, Shaw accompanied the Kamus String Quartet in her own compositions, which were interspersed with works by Beethoven, Alessandro Scarlatti and (actual) Renaissance-era composer Josquin des Prez. Shaw and Kamus first met two years ago at a festival in Finland, home of the group, and hit it off immediately. ‘I sang with them, and I just loved them. I love their personalities – they were very kind to each other and they play beautifully, and that comes out.’

A concert on 23 December by the Scottish Baroque ensemble Dunedin Consort will include the première of a choral work by Shaw. After hunting around for the right text, she has decided to write her own libretto, so audiences will have to wait until the debut to hear what she has in store.

Her third concert, in March 2025, will feature a piece that draws its influence from Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges’s short story *The Library of Babel*. Both she and her co-composer Gabriel Kahane have long been interested in this work, Shaw says, and their piece will use the titular library as an ‘anchoring concept. This idea of going into a place where you can get all ideas, everything that’s ever possibly been written or could be written, every possible variation is present in this place’. The piece will feature the duo’s voices, piano, a violin or viola, and electronic synths and effects. Shaw spoke enthusiastically about the collaboration with Kahane and ‘this idea of rooms and hallways and transitions and arrivals, the ability to reference and frame other works’.

As for the future, Shaw is always learning, about music and the business of music. She continues to subvert the expectation game by branching out – ‘I want to try everything’ – and refusing to play. ‘All of it’s made up … you have to just trust your gut’.

And she knows she has to do it for the right reasons. ‘I love music, that’s the number one thing, I know that, and that has to be number one. Even now, that has to be the thing I go back to because it’s the why, the why I do it.’

Forthcoming Concerts in this Residency:
MON 23 DEC 2024, 7.30PM
SAT 08 MAR 2025, 1.00PM
SAT 08 MAR 2025, 7.30PM

An electrifying talent: Sean Shibe

BY DAN CAIRNS

The young virtuosic guitarist roams from Dowland to Dylan in his quest for new audiences.

Sean Shibe © Iga Gozdowska

Bleary-eyed, hair askew, a tired-looking Sean Shibe appears on my computer screen. The 32-year-old English-Japanese guitarist has just flown in from California, where he was performing. Admitting to heavy jet lag, he stands in his kitchen in his pyjamas as he boils the kettle for a cup of tea. Fans of the boundary-pushing, genre-bending guitarist have grown accustomed to witnessing his fierce charisma, technical wizardry and miraculous grasp of texture and dynamics up close on the concert platform. An altogether different picture confronts me today. Such are the demands on an internationally acclaimed concert and recording artist. But Shibe has age on his side. He will catch up on sleep. And then, revived, set about scaling a fresh musical summit, a classical guitar in one hand, an electric guitar in the other.

A musical missionary, Shibe is at the forefront of a cohort of young musicians who are forging artistic connections and alliances that are bringing in a new generation of younger audiences – not least to Wigmore Hall, where Shibe commenced his residency this season. Under its artistic director John Gilhooly, the Hall is also at the forefront of this drive for new recruits to the classical cause. Vital work, and never more urgent than it is today, as the country surveys the wasteland of cuts to arts funding and education.

'John is doing a wonderful job,' says Shibe. 'He has played such an important role in helping me and others build up an audience. You watch ticket sales going up with each recital, for things that are relatively niche. Seriously, what a guy.'

Niche is one way of putting it, but open-minded might be a better description. Shibe and his contemporaries can certainly ruffle feathers – the clutch of audience members who fled a deafening electric guitar section of a recital he once gave at the Hall will attest to that – but their prime aim is to seek out new terrain that gives them room for artistic manoeuvre and experimentation. Shibe's ongoing relationship with Wigmore Hall provides him with just that.

That sense of experimentation, eschewing gimmickry, jumping in at the deep end, is key. Witness his Wigmore Hall concert earlier this year, at which he and the mezzo-soprano Ema Nikolovska led the audience through a captivating exploration of Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando*, to music by Dowland, Schubert, Bob Dylan, Cassandra Miller and more.

Given the right to roam, Shibe consistently seizes the opportunity. Cello and piano vied for his time when he was young, but classical guitar won the argument. He is passionate about his instrument, but equally determined to strap on an electric guitar as often as possible. 'The guitar and its relatives have lots of different positions in the hierarchy of classical music. Recently, the relatives of the classical guitar, notably the electric guitar, have gained more prominence in the repertoire. But historically, that wasn't the case. The classical guitar was very important to the aristocratic and ecclesiastical communities in the 1600s. I do think that its multifacetedness has at times been a great asset, but at other times in music, less so. It's cumulative as well. What I find so galvanising about the instrument is how many different things you are able to tap into in creating a varied programme.'

Shibe's residency bears this out. The programming of each concert – details of the third and final one are under wraps for now – is as varied and audacious as the award-winning recordings he has made for Delphian and Pentatone. And each speaks of an imaginativeness and an unwillingness to follow the obvious route that informed Shibe's artistic choices even as a student at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

'When I was starting to make a career it was definitely the case that I wasn't at all interested in what other guitarists were doing at the time – the Spanish 19th-century miniatures, say. A lot of that stuff is very good, of course. But it didn't interest me aesthetically at that point, though that has changed over time. Perhaps more important, had I gone down that route I suspect it might

Sean Shibe © Kaupo Kikkas

Saying classical music is ‘easy to understand’ and ‘its composers were the pop stars of their day’... I always think, well, no, wrong.

have resulted in a slightly more generic career, a less progressive one certainly.’

That desire to be progressive remains with him today, as the programming of the residency demonstrates. ‘In each concert there is sort of a focal point,’ Shibe stresses. ‘In the first recital [on 19 September], we looked at Frank Martin, whose *4 pièces brèves* were written for Segovia and championed by Julian Bream. In their very brief eight minutes they demonstrate a scope of imagination but also a total understanding of the intimacy of the instrument that I think few composers can muster. And then we had Thomas Adès’s first major work for guitar, which has a very different scope to it, six movements, and textures that are so varied, delicate and robust, and at times quite violent and clamorous.’

‘The second concert will feature me and Sasha Savaloni, who is my colleague at Guildhall, and with whom I studied as a student. There will be a new work by the Croatian composer Sara Glojnarić, and Helmut Lachenmann’s *Salut für Caudwell*. The point I want to make in all the concerts is: here are these very, very good composers for the guitar.’

The goal is to keep challenging himself – and his audience. Even in his sleepy state, Shibe becomes impassioned when talking about access to the arts and the urgency of reversing funding cuts. But he’d start much earlier, he says. ‘Access is not access unless you really have access to all aspects of classical music, the sublime parts rather than superficial ones. Saying classical music is “easy to understand” and “its composers were the pop stars of their day” ... I always think, well, no, wrong. Without changing the way access is provided in the early years, without curriculum changes and changes to funding at primary school level, our approach can only ever be superficial. The lack of serious funding for music in the state sector is a huge, continuing problem.’

That Shibe has attracted very little criticism for amalgamating genres and textures says much about how much more open-minded audiences for classical music are today. It hasn’t all been plain sailing. ‘I have friends who have been pretty cynical about what I’m doing,’ Shibe says, chuckling. ‘Yes, I play a lot of music by composers who are writing for electric guitar, but that’s what they set out to do, as have I. If I were making jazz arrangements of Bach, that would be a different kettle of fish, and I’d expect flak for that.’

Forthcoming Concerts in this Residency:

FRI 14 FEB 2025, 7.30PM
THU 29 MAY 2025, 7.30PM

A model £5 scheme for young music-lovers

BY HELEN HAWKINS

A quiet but important revolution has been taking place at Wigmore Hall, particularly over the past decade, when a key driver of this change was first created: its Under 35s scheme.

This allows eligible music-lovers to buy £5 tickets to those concerts at the Hall that offer this discount. They have been attending in rising numbers. Currently there are more than 31,000 names on the Hall's Under 35s database, and this year alone they bought more than 14,000 £5 tickets. Add in the 3,750 tickets allocated free via the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust for the under-26s, and this means well over 15% of the Hall's audience is now under 35.

'The Under 35s scheme has been doing what was it was meant to do,' says Wigmore Hall's executive director, John Gilhooly. 'It has changed the look and the dynamic of the audience – and the older regulars like it.'

We were talking in July, a holiday month when typically audiences drift away. But this year Gilhooly has been amazed to find most of the Hall's July concerts had been selling out, and the under 35s were a significant chunk of the audience.

It would be easy, and wrong, to assume that the majority of these younger concert-goers are hard-up music students. Gilhooly canvasses them when they come to special events at the Hall and discovers they might be vets, theology students, nurses. 'They come from all backgrounds – and the global majority is fully represented.'

What has sparked this trend? Social media sites have been important conduits, Gilhooly reckons. His new visitors have often heard about concerts via Instagram and other apps. But sealing the deal has very likely been the Hall's growing profile online through its live streams. After its ground-breaking decision to stream live concerts during lockdown, which undoubtedly saved the sanity of a live-music-starved public, 210 of the Hall's events in 2020/21 were watched 5.5 million times. These figures necessarily dropped when the Hall reopened and offered fewer streams. But in the 2023/24 period this still meant 51 concerts were watched by 212,000 people. (The year before that, when the phenomenal South Korean pianist Yunchan Lim's debut concert was streamed, that total leapt up to over 1.4 million.)

So people have ‘been inside’ the Hall on their laptops who had previously never visited it in person. Taking the next step, of actually buying a ticket and heading to Wigmore Street, had become that much easier. Paradoxically, the Hall’s literal inaccessibility had made it increasingly accessible.

Many older regulars didn’t resume concert-going after lockdown ended, but the demographic of the Hall’s audiences was already shifting, according to Gilhooly. ‘The core audience has changed radically over the past 20 years.’

So what are these younger audiences showing up for? Gilhooly has been amazed and thrilled by their choices. In early July they showed enthusiasm for everything from Indian classical music and the African Concert Series to traditional piano trios and French song. More predictably, Gilhooly says, they love the work of Philip Glass. But with unerring good taste they had also been buying tickets for late Beethoven and Haydn string quartets. ‘Also solo piano music, of every kind.’

The CAVATINA scheme, now run under the aegis of Wigmore Hall, neatly dovetails with the Under 35s offer. Set up by Simon and Pamela Majaro in 1998, it invites venues to become hosts of the scheme (a modest contribution is expected from them in return), which can then issue free tickets to concerts that fit the scheme’s criteria. The aim is to get the under-26s to chamber music – strictly, concerts performed by more than one player but no more than nine; the performances also have to be conductorless. String quartets are inevitably a favourite choice for this scheme. At the end of the year, the host venue tots up how many free tickets it issued and receives £10 for each of them from CAVATINA. The Hall’s Under 35s scheme uses slightly different criteria with no restrictions on the selection of concerts or number of £5 tickets available.

As the Under 35s scheme has progressed, Gilhooly has watched some of its participants graduating to bigger roles at the Hall. For one couple he knows, who used the £5 tickets in their youth, growing older has meant moving on to well-paid jobs and no longer having to choose between going to a concert or paying a babysitter. Recently they became patrons of the Hall and made a sizeable donation. The scheme has clearly done what it was meant to do.

Many older regulars didn’t resume concert-going after lockdown ended. ‘The core audience has changed radically over the past 20 years.’

THE SCORE, 2024 AUTUMN ISSUE

Your impact at a glance

Reflections on the 2023/24 Season and beyond

The Director's Fund was launched in October 2023. A year later, over £7 million has been pledged. The interest alone on £10 million would mitigate any loss of public funding. We must maintain annual fundraising of £3.5 million or more through sponsorships, memberships, and grants from trusts and foundations to underpin the whole concert and Learning programme.

The Fund will allow us to continue supporting emerging artists, creating inspirational programmes, and will free us from any unnecessary external constraints, particularly in relation to public funding. We are currently 97% self-sufficient, with only 3% of our funding coming from the public purse. Our composers and artists in residence series, diverse young talent and major international celebrities can only come to the Hall through both annual fundraising and this new long-term initiative. The Fund is managed and invested by Partners Capital; gains on investments are added to general funds at the end of each financial year.

Gifts in Wills continue to underpin both the Director’s Fund and our annual fundraising, so please feel free to contact me about any legacy pledges. I would be very pleased to talk these through in detail.

I cannot thank enough all of the generous donors, both to our annual fundraising and to this new Fund. The ambition is to get the Director’s Fund to £10 million by 2026, to give the Hall a firm footing for the next 50 years.

DIRECTOR, WIGMORE HALL

Thanks to your vital support in the 2023/24 Season

£3.55M
In ticket sales

+2,500
Artists

551
Concerts

COMMISSIONS

Brad Mehldau, Stewart Goodyear, Hilda Paredes, Francesco Antonioni, Jocelyn Campbell, Joseph Phibbs, Héloïse Werner, Laurence Osborn, Freya Waley-Cohen, Brett Dean, Piers Connor Kennedy, Oliver Leith and Julian Anderson

DEBUT RECITALS

Regula Mühlemann soprano, Alexandre Kantorow piano, Joe Lovano saxophone and Sphinx Organization

Raised in donations, grants and memberships

£2.23M
Revenue fundraising

£254K
Claimed on your gifts through Gift Aid

‘We are all custodians of this very special place, and your goodwill and generosity allow us always to plan an uncompromising quality of artistic experiences.’
– John Gilhooly

Extending our reach

14,202
£5 tickets for audience members under 35

3,754
Free tickets for young people, subsidised by CAVATINA

302
Individuals taking part in our Music for Life programme for people living with dementia and their carers and family members

258
Workshops and events for early-career musicians, students and trainees with the Wigmore Hall Learning Programme

151
Creative music making sessions for school children

12
British Sign Language interpreted concerts for schools and family audiences

Why we need your support

£13,700
The average amount it **costs** to put on an **evening concert**

£9,600
The average income in **ticket sales** per concert

£4,100
Each evening we must **average £4,100** in support through **donations, memberships, major gifts** and **grants**

Creative music making in the community

467
Wigmore Hall Learning events

19,221
Engagements across the Programme

Creativity is at the heart of Wigmore Hall's Learning Programme. We aim to engage with our community by leading a wide variety of music activities; from concerts at Wigmore Hall for babies through to interactive workshops in care homes, and everything in between, we seek to bring creativity, connection and joy to all we work with. The Learning Programme costs around £500,000 each year to run, and we are grateful to all those who support this life enhancing work.

As part of the Learning Programme we collaborate closely with the NHS, schools, music education hubs, care homes, social care organisations, the Royal Academy of Music, Solace Woman's Aid and youth justice services in Barking and Dagenham.

Singing with Friends © James Berry

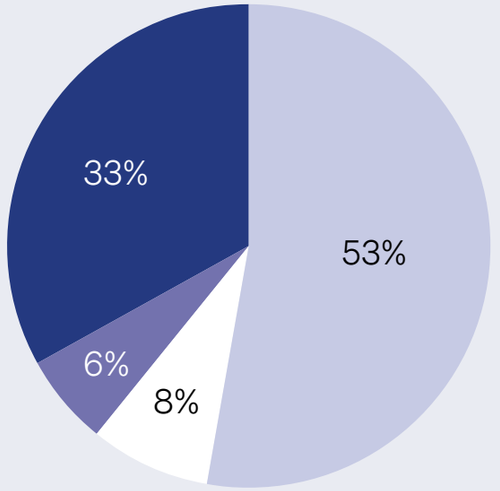
PSP Celebration Day © Rohan Negi

Chamber Tots © James Berry

'This was the best week in my entire life. Finding the space and permission to be myself does not come easy. People are often paid to listen to me but don't actually care. I liked being collaborators and musicians together.' – Participant from Youth Justice Project

Looking ahead to the 2024/25 Season and beyond

How your gifts support our annual revenue fundraising



*this percentage does not include public funding

**Gift Aid allows us to claim an additional 25% on your donations at no extra cost to you. This vital additional income makes up around 8% of our annual fundraising every season

Artistic highlights in the 2024/25 Season

- Pianist **Julius Drake** celebrates the achievements in song of Mendelssohn and Liszt, two very different contemporaries, across the season.
- Norwegian violinist **Vilde Frang** appears in residence throughout the season.
- The **Leonkoro Quartet**, winner of the 2022 Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition, gives the first performance of Judith Weir's Second String Quartet on 21 November.
- Pulitzer prize-winning composer **Caroline Shaw** is Composer in Residence for the 2024/25 Season.
- The **African Concert Series** returns for two full days of concerts in March and July 2025.
- World-leading pianists **Yunchan Lim** and **Víkingur Ólafsson** give recitals in April 2025.

Music with a different focus

BY DAVID THOMPSON

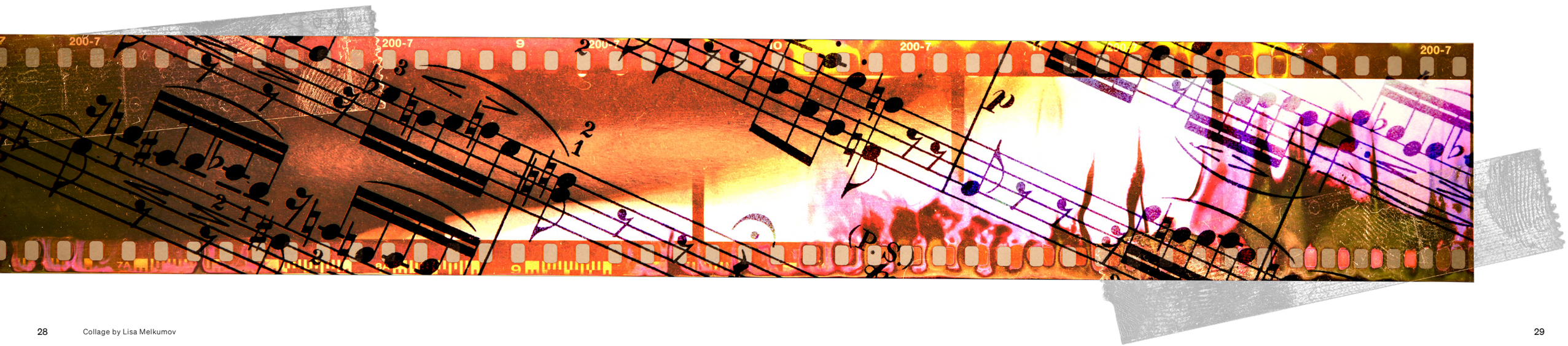
The Hall will kick off a festival of concert music by composers who write for screens big and small.

Bernard Herrmann, revered for his collaborations with such great directors as Orson Welles on *Citizen Kane* and Alfred Hitchcock on *Psycho*, always considered himself a composer who worked in films and not a mere 'film composer'. It's an attitude warmly shared by the cellist Richard Harwood, who has devised a highly varied programme of pieces by composers one rarely hears in the context of a regular concert. 'For a long time it has been a case of putting them in a box. I hope this concert will establish that because they're known for one thing, it doesn't mean they can't do the other, and vice versa.'

Harwood's carefully selected programme (19 March), which begins with solo cello pieces and then adds other musicians, building up to a string quartet, is kicking off eight days of concerts, screenings, talks and masterclasses throughout London, all under the banner of the London Soundtrack Festival. It's the first of its kind, attracting such names as Howard Shore, Hildur Guðnadóttir, Anne Dudley and Anna Meredith, and was conceived by Tommy Pearson, the musician and broadcaster who for some time has been on a mission to have film scores heard and appreciated outside of the cinema. The connection with Harwood came through one of the composers featured in the Wigmore concert, Christopher Gunning, who died last year after a prolific career in film and television. Gunning's widow asked Pearson to create a festival to honour his example, with a special award in his name to be presented to Howard Shore.

'I got to know Christopher working together in the Thames Jubilee Pageant, on a boat,' Harwood explains. 'That sparked a friendship, and in 2017 he asked me to record his Cello Concerto with the Royal Philharmonic.' Six months after that session, Harwood was offered the position of principal cello in the orchestra, a role that ended this summer after its tour of China. 'I've been a lifelong fan of ITV's *Poirot*, and I don't think he realised how amazing his score was for the series, with a simple theme that instantly takes you somewhere.' He admits to being rather starstruck on their first encounter. 'Like so many composers working for the screen, he was so well taught – he studied with Richard Rodney Bennett and Edmund Rubbra.' For a certain generation (me included), Gunning's themes for commercials for Martini and Black Magic will always be ringing in our heads.

A year after his death, a memorial concert for Gunning was given at Cadogan Hall in March 2024, put together by Pearson. Harwood performed a piece the composer wrote specially for him, *Lament*, conceived in response to events in Syria, which will be at the centre of the Wigmore programme. But Pearson already knew of Harwood's passion for film composers, and how it had resulted in an album he recorded in 2013 for the label Resonus. Entitled *Composing Without the Picture*, it consists of concert works for solo cello from nine composers, including Ennio Morricone and John Williams. 'It shows what they can do when they're not restricted by a script or a director's wishes or the whims of production,' Harwood says.



Collage by Lisa Melkumov

‘So often in screen music scores, they’ll have an arsenal of musicians, or even banks of live recorded samples, synthetic sounds and effects. This was a case of, what can they do with one instrument?’ One such piece – clearly popular with cellists, given the number of performances of it on YouTube – was Miklós Rózsa’s *Toccata Capricciosa*, a virtuoso work with a passionate Hungarian flavour that he dedicated to the memory of Gregor Piatigorsky. It kicks off the Wigmore concert.

In addition to Rózsa and Gunning, there will also be works by Dario Marianelli and Rachel Portman, both of whom Harwood has worked with in recording sessions. In the case of Marianelli, this included his music for *Agora* (‘a phenomenal score’), *Quartet* and *Darkest Hour*. ‘Dario’s piece, *I Think I Do Remember Him*, which I recorded on the album, was written when he was a student at the National Film and Television School. His music is so well crafted, he really knows what he wants, it’s always a real pleasure to work for him.’ Harwood also regards Rachel Portman, who has about 100 film scores to her name, as a ‘major screen composer’. Her selection is *Juniper*, written for piano, violin and cello, which appeared on her purely instrumental album, *ask the river*.

Hildur Guðnadóttir is the youngest of the composers featured, and also a cellist; her piece is a new commission, which Harwood has yet to receive. She has already been lauded for her moody, imposing scores for the TV series *Chernobyl* and the film *Joker*. The latter won her an Academy Award; in fact, with the exception of Gunning, all the composers featured are fellow winners. Rózsa picked up three, and Herrmann one, though oddly not for his work with Hitchcock. The concert ends with his string quartet, *Echoes*, which to my ears makes clear reference to his music for *Vertigo*, famously inspired by Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* in its dark, passionate atmosphere. Harwood also senses ‘elements of Debussy and Shostakovich, an interesting blend of colours and moods. But it’s true there’s little deviation from the musical voice we hear on the screen.’

Harwood’s discovery of film composers came from some unexpected sources. Aside from being moved by Morricone’s score for *The Untouchables*, he cites James Newton Howard’s music for *Dave* as the one that led him ‘to investigate the art and world of film scoring and screen music much more closely’. He wrote a weekly soundtrack column for *The News*, which served the Portsmouth region, in the late 1990s. And he fondly recalls the music he heard in the popular TV detective series *Columbo*, especially an episode scored by Jonathan Tunick, famous for orchestrating the musicals of Stephen Sondheim.

Harwood believes textures have become more important than melodies, and that in comparison with, for example, the symphonic scores of John Williams, a lot of current film music is just mood and atmosphere, adapted to suit the picture. ‘When things couldn't be changed so readily, I think composers were given more scope.’ In which case, will that perhaps in future lead them to write more for the concert hall?

Forthcoming Concert:
WED 19 MAR 2025, 1.00PM

Sixty years of the Nash Ensemble

BY MARK PULLINGER

Founder Amelia Freedman on the pioneering group’s anniversary concerts of their most loved pieces.

Nash Ensemble c.1970s L to R: Judith Pearce, Robin Miller, Antony Pay, Brian Wightman, John Pigneguy, Brian Hawkins, Rodney Slatford, Christopher van Kampen, Marcia Crayford

It all started down the pub. ‘I used to organise concerts at the Royal Academy, even though I was only a student,’ Amelia Freedman, founder and artistic director of the Nash Ensemble, tells me. ‘In those days at the Academy, there was only one orchestral rehearsal a week and a few chamber music concerts, but not much else. We all used to go to the Rising Sun, and about 20 of my fellow students said to me, “Amelia, you’re the only person who can organise us. Will you start a new group?” I didn’t really want to, but they persuaded me to by plying me with lots of drinks!’

That was in October 1964. ‘Our first concert was in January 1965 at the American Embassy under the umbrella of John Wolf’s Park Lane Group. We played two programmes of American music and Stravinsky and started to get our first reviews. From then on, somehow or other, I kept it going. One of the professors said: “It’s very naive of you, Amelia, because within three months it will dissolve”… and that was 60 years ago! I’m quite proud of that.’

But why the Nash Ensemble? ‘I was going to call it the Academy Ensemble,’ Freedman explains, ‘which was a fairly sensible name, but the Principal, Sir Thomas Armstrong, was concerned that I was a bit too ambitious, so we named it after the terraces around the Royal Academy, which were designed by John Nash. So really we’re named after an architect!’

‘Early on, I was influenced by the Melos Ensemble, which contained members of the London Symphony Orchestra in particular, including Gervase de Peyer on clarinet, a wonderful group, playing and recording interesting music. I was always keen to explore repertoire that hadn’t been played for years and years, trying to bring to the audience little gems they wouldn’t have heard before.’

I well remember discovering works such as Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov’s Piano and Wind Quintet or Franz Berwald’s Grand Septet via Nash Ensemble discs. ‘We worked with CRD in the early days, recording works by Spohr and Hummel, composers who were very popular in their own day, but were not when we started to record them.

‘There wasn’t really another group like us, so we performed 15-20 concerts a season, and

Nash Ensemble c.1960s L to R: Judith Pearce, John Williams, Amelia Freedman, Brian Wightman

that grew. We started to work for the British Council, and went abroad on engagements as ambassadors. We had the Arts Council Contemporary Music Network which toured the country and we were part of that, along with the London Sinfonietta.’

In 1968, Freedman presented the Nash’s first concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, which had opened a year earlier, and then William Lyne invited the ensemble to Wigmore Hall. ‘In 1979 I started doing these themed series at the Hall. The first was a collaboration with William with a focus on the music of Gabriel Fauré, and it just went on from there. In 2010 we became a resident ensemble at the Hall and we’ve been

‘I try to connect things and have contrasts and different colours; in a way, my programmes are visual.’

there ever since, with great support from John Gilhooly who has been miraculous.

‘I love exploring music I’ve never heard before or digging around the Grove Dictionary. One could say I have a talent for it – a strange, odd talent, but I have a feel for a programme. I always think of them like paintings. You can look at some concert programmes and one work seems to have no relation to any of the others. I don’t do that. I try to connect things and have contrasts and different colours; in a way, my programmes are visual. I can’t help but explore things. I’m trying to find chamber works by Ethyl Smyth at the moment because I’m going to do a British series in 2025-26, Those Blue Remembered Hills. I do hope people will come!’

As well as unearthing works from the past, Freedman is immensely proud of the ensemble’s record in performing new pieces. ‘From the very beginning I began to commission new works. We’ve given around 330 world premières, including 240 commissions from 225 different composers. I’m proud of my relationship with composers, not just the great names like Harrison Birtwistle, Peter Maxwell Davies, Olivier Messiaen, Henri Dutilleux or Hans Werner Henze, but supporting young composers throughout their careers, like Mark-Anthony Turnage, Simon Holt, Colin and David Matthews. I knew them from when they were young and unknown and have commissioned some of them more than once. We’ve built up a relationship, and I’ve watched them develop over the years.’

‘I’m also very proud of our relationship with the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) in our Side-by-Side project, where we present music by young composers, as well as giving a concert at Wigmore Hall with several of the Nash coaching and playing. The standards are so high now, much higher than when I was at the Academy! For this 60th anniversary season, though, there is no overarching theme.

‘This season is about celebrating all the wonderful pieces we’ve championed over the years.’ It’s a programme of everything from English music to Austro-German and French repertoire that has me drooling. ‘It’s the most beloved of the chamber music that we’ve supported and loved. We will play the most wonderful pieces we’ve been associated with, so it should be very special.’

Forthcoming Concerts in this Series:
SAT 09 NOV 2024, 5.30PM & 7.30PM
SAT 14 DEC 2024, 5.30PM & 7.30PM
SAT 11 JAN 2025, 5.30PM & 7.30PM
SAT 08 FEB 2025, 5.30PM & 7.30PM
SUN 09 FEB 2025, 11.30AM
SAT 01 MAR 2025, 5.30PM & 7.30PM
TUE 18 MAR 2025, NASH INVENTIONS

Francesco, the unknown Scarlatti

BY ANDREW STEWART

The Armonico Consort has become a champion of the overlooked Francesco Scarlatti, whose oratorio *Daniele* it will perform at the Hall.

In a game of musical word association, the name Scarlatti would surely trigger the response, 'Domenico'. Or perhaps the prolific keyboard composer's father, Alessandro, the so-called founder of Neapolitan opera, might spring to mind. Odds are that Alessandro's younger brother Francesco would rank low on the Scarlatti awareness test.

The Armonico Consort and its founder-director Christopher Monks are set to shift the recognition dial in favour of the 'forgotten Scarlatti' at Wigmore Hall on 10 January 2025 with the London premiere of Francesco's *Daniele*. While rooted in the Old Testament book of Daniel, the Italian composer's dramatic oratorio includes stirring scenes drawn from the Greek Apocrypha. The 55-minute work shares the bill with Handel's *Dixit Dominus*, a thrilling setting of Psalm 110 in its Latin translation.

'Francesco Scarlatti's music is unlike anything I know from the Baroque,' says Monks. 'You can hear traces of the Venetian school in his sacred music, for instance. Or you might sense Francesco's debt to renaissance polyphony in his intricate fugues. But I don't know of anything else like it. When we performed his *Dixit Dominus* and Mass at Worcester Cathedral for this year's Three Choirs Festival, people queued round the cloister to buy our recording of both pieces after the concert. That was a spontaneous response to the music's huge emotional power.'

Monks pays tribute to the part played by his former university teacher and now colleague, Geoffrey Webber, in rescuing *Daniele* from the den of archival obscurity. The Cambridge-based academic and keyboard player took the short journey from home to consult its manuscript score, preserved today at the Fitzwilliam Museum. 'Francesco came to London in 1719 and spent the last years of his life in Britain,' notes Webber. 'That was entirely typical for so many Italian musicians, who could make a good living in London. Francesco brought his library with him and much of it passed into collections in England after his death in 1741.'

Pandemic lockdowns enabled Webber to spend time with *Daniele*. Struck by the quality of its music, he made a performing edition from the composer's score. Monks and his ensemble used it for the work's first performance in 300 years, given last January at the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick, and its world premiere recording for Signum Classics. 'The original parts haven't survived, but the score is neat and certainly more legible than Francesco's *Dixit*,' says Webber. While the composer's handwriting may be clear, his score is sketchy on matters of instrumentation. It occasionally says "tromba", so you know what the trumpet is doing, but the division of string parts means it's not obvious who should be playing what. There's a fascinating echo aria, where the echo is given to a violin and either a cello or viola. Chris has discovered which of the two instruments works best by performing it.'

Daniele dates from Francesco's time at the royal court in his home city of Palermo. Having followed his brother Alessandro to Naples, he returned to Sicily in 1691 and stayed for nearly two decades. 'Italy was then the centre of the musical universe, with a thriving milieu for music in Sicily,' notes Webber. Handel, who joined the flood of northern European composers drawn to the Italian peninsula, created his own *Dixit* setting soon after arriving in Rome in 1707. Its extrovert writing for five-part chorus, bold orchestral ritornellos and expressive vocal

Twelve Temptations - Daniel in the Lions' Den

‘His music is unlike anything I know from the Baroque,’ says Monks.

solos combine to form a dramatic sacred cantata. Handel’s sense of theatre registers throughout the piece, hammering home the psalmist’s message that God stands ready to ‘shatter the skulls’ of the righteous ruler’s enemies. *Dixit Dominus*, first performed at Santa Maria di Montesanto in July 1707, helped its 22-year-old composer secure powerful patrons among Rome’s ecclesiastical and secular elite.

Francesco, perhaps on Handel’s invitation, travelled to London in 1719. He eventually joined the band of musicians serving the viceregal court in Dublin and remained in Ireland, profoundly impoverished in his final years. ‘I recently discovered notice of a benefit concert given for him around 1720 in London, at Hickford’s music room off the Haymarket, which shows that the music performed was predominantly by Francesco, “brother of the famous Alessandro”,’ Webber observes. ‘It’s quite possible his *Dixit Dominus* was performed then, but we don’t know for sure.’

Besides recounting the story of how God spared the pious Daniel from becoming lion food, Francesco’s anonymous librettist also recalls the tale of Bel and the Dragon, a cautionary narrative about the moral hazards of idol-worship drawn from the Greek Apocrypha’s extended book of Daniel. ‘*Daniele* ends with the familiar lion’s den story,’ explains Webber, “but the libretto takes much of Daniel’s backstory from the apocryphal book of Daniel. The exploding dragon is a great part of it. The dragon sings a sort of smoking song, which is rather fun, before Daniel bakes cakes from various explosive elements and feeds them to the dragon, which promptly explodes!’

Francesco’s music has long been part of Armonico Consort life. Monks was introduced to it by one of his band’s early members, Christopher Hair, a budding musicologist already immersed in Francesco Scarlatti studies. The group made the world premiere recording of Franceso’s *Dixit Dominus* just two years after its foundation in 2001. ‘Francesco’s music has been with us from the start,’ Monks recalls. ‘I adored it then and still do – it’s never left my side! We performed it at Wigmore Hall in 2003 and, by breathing in, managed to get everyone onstage. Now we have to discover how to make the echo effects in *Daniele* work there, so we’ll experiment with that in rehearsal. It’s certainly the perfect place to perform Francesco’s dramatic music.’

Forthcoming Concert:
FRI 10 JAN 2025, 7.30PM

There will be a Pre-Concert Talk at 6.00pm
NB time: Geoffrey Webber, speaker.
Free (ticket required)

Mariam Batsashvili © Attila Kleb

In love with Liszt

BY CORY OLDWEILER

Why the Georgian pianist Mariam Batsashvili decided the Romantic virtuoso was ‘her’ composer

The Georgian pianist Mariam Batsashvili credits her grandmother, a former piano teacher, with setting her on her career path at a young age. Grandma encouraged ‘each and every’ member of the family to take lessons, which meant that even as an infant Batsashvili was surrounded by the sounds of her cousins practising. At the age of four,

she wanted to try for herself. ‘Since then I never – even for one day or one hour – had any doubts that this is what I want to do. It was very, very clear.’

A string of awards bolstered her decision, starting with a national competition in Georgia when she was seven years old. In 2011, she won the young pianists competition at Weimar’s Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt, where she would also earn her undergraduate and graduate degrees. And in 2014, Batsashvili again saw her career linked to the great Hungarian Romantic when she won the 10th edition of the Franz Liszt Piano Competition in Utrecht.

The virtuosity of Liszt’s ‘absolute hits’, *La Campanella* and *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*, first attracted Batsashvili as a young teenager. ‘I can play so fast and there are lots of jumps and it’s so loud, and I was thinking, wow this, this is piano playing!’ Once her teacher had led her to appreciate the ‘very soft side and very lyrical side which is hidden behind all these acrobatic things’, she was hooked. ‘I realised, this is my composer.’

Your Wigmore recital in January will conclude with two of Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, the 12th and 13th. Why these two, perhaps less popular ones?

What I like about these two is that in both you have slow parts in which you are seeing some melancholy, sadness, some stories being told, and then you have the faster parts leaning in the direction of happiness, joy and celebration. You have two [contrasting motivations], one is very, very serious and probably dramatic, and then after this we are seeing how a person can either bury this burden or just carry it as it is and still continue living. There are always some morals in his pieces, but for me this Hungarian spirit fits very well somehow with my own nature.

I also see that range in Brahms, Op 118. He’s one of my favourite composers for that very reason, that he is able to encompass such a wide range of emotions.

Exactly. I like very much that I have the possibility within one piece to touch many, many, many different aspects [of human emotion], and in this piece I feel that there are so many different sides and different corners of the soul that I can go and touch. People sometimes don't remember how, in one of the most beautiful pieces [the A major *Intermezzo*], you don’t feel this every day. So when you hear this piece, you feel there is beauty in life and that your life has sense. This is what his music is doing, it is pointing to moments in our own history, in our own life, our own surroundings. In this selection of Brahms’s music, I feel that what one can possibly experience as a human being on earth, he’s describing that in every one of these little pieces.

You open with two works in major keys, Haydn’s Piano Sonata in D HXVI/37 and Beethoven’s whimsical *Rondo a Capriccio*.

The Haydn sonata, which is quite small and very cheerful, is really showcasing why Haydn is a fantastic composer and should not be underrated compared with Mozart and Beethoven. I think he is equally talented and has equally beautiful and wonderful music, meaningful music. I put them together because I wanted to showcase that Beethoven can also be fun, he doesn't always need to be these dark sonatas at the edge of

‘Liszt’s Hungarian spirit fits very well somehow with my own nature’

Mariam Batsashvili © Attila Kleb

life or death, he can also be fun and rage over the lost penny.

Next spring you’re also scheduled to play the Liszt E-flat major Concerto with the Hallé. Is there anyone you’d love to collaborate with?

I have coming up in the next season lots of collaborations with orchestras actually, and I’m excited about them, but I could not choose somebody I would dream to play with. This would have been Abbado, Claudio Abbado, but he's not alive any more, he was my dream to play with...

Forthcoming Concert:
WED 22 JAN 2025, 7.30PM

Membership Events

WED 26 FEB 2025, 10.30AM

Backstage Tour of Wigmore Hall

See Wigmore Hall from a new perspective and delve into its rich history on this exclusive backstage tour. You'll have the opportunity to take to the stage in the footsteps of artists past and present, as well as discover what it takes to live-stream a concert and gain insight into the day-to-day operations of this busy building.

Tours will be given in small groups with staggered start times between 10.30am and 12.00pm and are expected to last approximately 45 minutes.

£15

FRI 7 MAR 2025, 2.30PM

Women of Wigmore II

Following last year's International Women's Day talk on some of the extraordinary women who make up Wigmore Hall's history, join our Archivist for another dive into these endlessly rewarding waters. From pioneering composers to legendary performers via some unexpected twists and turns, hear their stories and discover the ways in which they made Wigmore Hall their home.

£12

Renata Borgatti by John Singer Sargent

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Online:
Visit wigmore-hall.org.uk/friends
(You will need to sign in to your online account or set up an account to book).

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Membership

Braimah Kanneh-Mason, Jeneba Kanneh-Mason and Sheku Kanneh-Mason © Richard Cannon

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Wigmore Hall News

Wigmore Hall/Bollinger International Song Competition 2024

The 2024 Competition provided a week of wonderful music making, driven by the incredibly high standard of this year's competitors – 24 duos from all over the world. The jury had a very difficult job, but Anja Mittermüller emerged as the clear – and youngest ever – winner of the contest, aged just 20. Anja is a mezzo-soprano from Austria, currently studying in Hanover; we look forward to hearing her at the Hall in the future.

Anja Mittermuller © Benjamin Ealovega

Wigmore Medal

Congratulations to Elisabeth Leonskaja, who was awarded the Wigmore Medal on 29 September following her performance of Schubert's last three piano sonatas as part of our Autumn International Piano Festival.

© Richard Cannon

By Royal Command

We were delighted to hear that Mared Pugh-Evans had been appointed Official Harpist to His Majesty The King earlier this year. Mared is well known to Wigmore Hall through her performance work with Music for Life, but has also worked in the Hall's Restaurant! Congratulations, and we look forward to following her career over the coming years.

Mared Pugh-Evans © James Berry

THE SCORE, 2024 AUTUMN ISSUE

DIRECTOR

JOHN GILHOOLY, CBE, OSI, HONFRAM, HONRCM, HON FGS, HONFRIAM

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