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NICHOLAS DANIEL
with the
BRITTEN OBOE QUARTET



King's Hall

Wednesday 12th December 2018



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TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME

Moeran

Phantasy Quartet
(First performance at ICC)

Rodney Bennett

Arethusa
(First performance at ICC)

Françaix

Quartet for cor anglais and string trio
(First performance at ICC)

INTERVAL

(Coffee, tea and bar facilities available in the Winter Garden)

J. S. Bach

Goldberg variations – a selection for string trio
(First performance at ICC)

Weir

Sundew for violin and cello
(First performance at ICC)

Knussen

Cantata, op 15 (Triptych part 3)
(First performance at ICC)

Mozart

Oboe Quartet in F major, K370
(Last performance at ICC 06/05/2015)

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The Club records its appreciation of the invaluable assistance and support given by the City of Bradford Metropolitan Council.



PROGRAMME NOTES

ERNEST MOERAN (1894-1950)

Phantasy Quartet

'I board and lodge in this little pub overlooking Rockland Broad ... in the evening I go out rowing on these "lonely waters"... this reedy neighbourhood seems to suggest oboe music.' So, wrote Ernest Moeran in 1946 having returned to find inspiration in Norfolk where he had spent a happy childhood. Severely injured in the First World War (by a piece of shrapnel which was lodged too close to his brain to be removed), Moeran established a considerable reputation in the 1920s with a symphony and several concertos. The Phantasy Quartet was written for and premiered by the celebrated oboist Leon Goossens and is cast in a single free-flowing movement. Two Norfolk folk tunes make an appearance – *Seventeen Come Sunday* and *The Pretty Ploughboy* – and the mood is evocative of the tranquil, watery landscape; 'sunshine over rural England', as the *Times* critic commented after the premiere.

(Duration: approx. 15 minutes)

RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT (1936-2012)

Arethusa (1989)

Allegro lirica Cadenza I (cello) – Presto Cadenza II (oboe) – Poco adagio

Richard Rodney Bennett, who died in New York in 2012 aged 76, pursued multiple musical lives with extraordinary success. He was not only one of the more distinguished soundtrack composers of his era, winning Oscar nominations for his work on *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1967), *Nicholas and Alexandra* (1971) and *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974), but also studied under Boulez, becoming a master of 12 tone techniques as well as enjoying a career as a virtuoso jazz pianist. Sadly, the sheer range of his achievements have rather clouded his reputation; as an obituarist wrote, he 'could hardly have designed his career better to alienate critics in every one of the fields in which he was so talented.'

Commissioned and first performed at the Purcell Room, London in 1989 by Graham Salter and the Arethusa Oboe Quartet, *Arethusa* is an intense, complex piece played as a single movement with intricate cadenzas for both oboe and cello. *Arethusa* was a wood nymph, a chaste attendant of Artemis to whom she pleaded for protection when pursued by the river god Alpheus.

Perspiring heavily during the chase, she was transformed into a stream and Artemis helped her to flow beneath the sea to the island of Ortygia but not before Alpheus had caught up with her and their waters had mingled.

(Duration: approx. 8 minutes)

**JEAN FRANÇAIX
(1912-1997)**

**Quartet for cor anglais
and string trio (1970)**

**Allegro vivace
Andante tranquillo
Vivo assai
Andantino
Allegro giocoso**

‘Among the child’s gifts I observe above all the most fruitful an artist can possess, that of curiosity: you must not stifle these precious gifts now or ever, or risk letting this young sensibility wither.’ Happily, Maurice Ravel’s advice to the parents of the young Jean Françaix did not go unheeded. Françaix developed into an astonishingly prolific composer of more than 200 works characterised by wit and a lightness of touch; a neo-classical counterpart to Haydn perhaps.

Composed for the unusual combination of cor anglais and string trio in five movements, Françaix’s Quartet alternates between two very contrasting moods. The first, third and fifth movements are bright and lively ragtime-like exchanges between the instruments whilst the second and fourth movements are contemplative and expressive and employ the mellow, autumnal timbre of the cor anglais to powerful effect.

(Duration: approx. 15 minutes)

INTERVAL

(Coffee, tea and bar facilities available in the Winter Garden)

**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
(1685-1750)**

**Goldberg variations
– a selection for string trio**

One of Bach’s first biographers, Johann Nikolaus Forkel tells us that ‘Count Kaiserling [Russian Ambassador to the Saxon Court] was often ill and had sleepless nights. At such times, Goldberg, his harpsichord player who lived in his house, had to spend the night in an antechamber, so as to play for him during his insomnia. ... Once the Count mentioned in Bach’s presence that he would like to have some clavier pieces for Goldberg, which should be of such

a smooth and somewhat lively character that he might be a little cheered up by them in his sleepless nights.’ Bach duly obliged, composing an Aria and thirty variations which stand as one of the towering achievements in the genre. Forkel tells us, ‘Thereafter the Count always called them his variations. He never tired of them, and for a long time sleepless night meant: “Dear Goldberg, do play me one of *my* variations”.’ Forkel’s account may be unreliable; Goldberg was only 14 years old at the time and there is no dedication to the Count which may indicate that he did not commission the piece. Unusually, the work was published (in 1741) in Bach’s own lifetime.

There have been many transcriptions, from organ to guitar quartet, but tonight’s rendition of a selection of the variations for string trio by Dmitry Sitkovetsky is one of the most successful. First performed in 1984 and inspired by Glenn Gould’s famous 1981 piano recording, Sitkovetsky revised the transcription in 2009 omitting many of the repeats so as to ‘inject energy to propel the piece from the beginning to the end.’

(Duration: approx. 10 minutes)

JUDITH WEIR (born 1954)

Sundew for violin and cello (2014)

The bog-based Sundew plant isn’t as pleasant as its name suggests. It produces beads of fluid, resembling dew, but in fact a sticky deposit in which visiting insects become trapped. The plant closes on the insect and digests it for the extra nutrition it needs in an acidic habitat.

Each of the 36 bars of the music can be understood as a time-lapse study of parts of this process. Often, one instrument encloses and digests the music of the other. Occasionally one player tries to struggle free; at other times both exist motionless, stuck to each other. In the final bars, a lucky insect (the violin) escapes from the goo and flies off into the ether.

© Judith Weir

(Duration: approx. 3 minutes)

OLIVER KNUSSEN Cantata, op 15 (Triptych part 3) (1977) (1952-2018)

Cantata was begun at Tanglewood, Massachusetts, in July 1975 and completed in London in October 1977. During this long period I was trying to as it were define my musical space – a time of considerable frustration and little completed work – exploring the harmonic areas I had stumbled upon when composing the first part of my *Third Symphony* (1973-79). The three pieces which eventually emerged, *Autumnal* for violin and piano Op 14, *Sonya’s Lullaby* for piano Op 16 and the present *Cantata* Op 15, form a sort

of mini-trilogy, all being on one level abstract pieces concerned with harmonic coherence, and on another level intimate, diary-like expressions. *Autumnal* is tense, compressed and detailed. *Cantata* is consciously more relaxed and lyrical, but also quite compact – a single movement playing for about ten minutes. The title was arrived at after noticing that the relationships between the various episodes reminded me of the interdependence of recitatives and more-or-less self-contained numbers in some 18th-century solo cantatas, an impression reinforced by the predominance of the oboe. A slow introductory section proceeds, via a sequence of quasi-developmental episodes, towards a wild climactic passage featuring an elaborately ornamented (almost oriental) oboe line over manic violin and cello pizzicati. There follows an extended coda, in which the opening oboe melody reappears in altered form over a gently rocking repeated figure in the strings. Although essentially abstract, the work is certainly subjective, which fact may encourage the listener to let the music evoke whatever personal imagery it may contain.

© Oliver Knussen

(Duration: approx 10 minutes)

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Oboe Quartet in F major, K370 Allegro Adagio Rondo: Allegro

In January 1781, Mozart was in Munich to complete his opera *Idomeneo*, which had been commissioned by Elector Karl Theodor for the forthcoming carnival celebration. Composing the opera had exhausted Mozart who had been able to complete only a handful of other pieces over the winter. In Munich, he was able to renew an acquaintance with the oboist Friedrich Ramm whose virtuosity (and state-of-the-art new oboe) inspired this Quartet.

The work gives due prominence to the oboe but avoids mere display and encompasses a wide range of feeling. This is particularly noticeable in the *Adagio*, an aria-like movement in D minor, only 37 bars long but deeply expressive. The *Rondo* finale contains a remarkable passage of thirteen bars where the oboe plays in 4/4 time against the continued 6/8 accompaniment, creating a tension which is relieved only when the major key and compound time return together in the middle of a semiquaver passage for the oboe. The final section of the *Rondo* makes full use of the instrument's higher range; Ramm's new oboe could reach a 'high F' above the staff, a note rarely attempted in any previous oboe repertoire.

(Duration: approx. 15 minutes)

Programme notes © C.N. Lane except where otherwise stated

NICHOLAS DANIEL WITH BRITTEN OBOE QUARTET

Nicholas Daniel *oboe/cor anglais*
Clare Finnimore *viola*

Jacqueline Shave *violin*
Caroline Dearnley *cello*

Nicholas Daniel founded the **Britten Oboe Quartet** together with colleagues and co-principals of the Britten Sinfonia. They bring to this ensemble not only the highest musical standards but also the experience of playing together over many years, resulting in warm, expressive and above all enjoyable playing. They perform music of the greatest quality as well as lesser known works from Britain and abroad. As well as twentieth-century repertoire for oboe and cor anglais quartet by such composers as Britten, Berkeley, Knussen, Gordon Jacob and Elisabeth Lutyens, their imaginative programming often includes string trios, solo works such as Britten's *Metamorphoses after Ovid* and other chamber combinations.

The quartet has been heard up and down the UK, from Aberdeen to the Gregynog Festival in Wales, Swaledale, and Wimbledon Festivals, Oxford, Brighton, Wigmore Hall and Kings Place in London. Their most recent tours have included the RNCM in Manchester, and Sheffield and Keele Universities. Their debut recording, 'A Tribute to Janet' was released to great acclaim on the Harmonia Mundi label in 2017.

Nicholas Daniel has long been acknowledged as one of the world's great oboe players and is one of Britain's best-known musicians. He first came to the attention of the public at the age of 18 when he won the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition. After studying at the Royal College of Music he quickly established his career with early debuts at the BBC Proms and on disc.

For more than four decades Nicholas has been an important ambassador in many different musical fields and has significantly enlarged the repertoire for his instrument with the commissioning of hundreds of new works. He records and broadcasts widely and has a huge international following on social media! He has directed music festivals at home and abroad and is highly sought after as a teacher, being Professor at the Trossingen Musikhochschule in Germany and at the Guildhall School of Music in London.

Since his BBC Proms conducting debut in 2004, Nicholas has worked with many fine ensembles in wide-ranging repertoire from Baroque to contemporary and from small groups to opera. He is Musical Director of *Triorca*, an orchestral project that brings together talented young musicians from Serbia, Germany and the UK. For '*his outstanding contribution to the musical life of the nation*' he was presented with the Queen's Medal for Music in 2012 by Her Majesty the Queen.

As a chamber musician Nicholas is a founder member of the Britten Sinfonia, the Haffner Wind Ensemble and the Britten Oboe Quartet. He also works regularly with pianists Charles Owen and Julius Drake and with many leading string quartets. He is principal oboist of Camerata Pacifica, California's leading chamber music ensemble.

Nicholas plays the world's first 'fair trade oboe', certified by the Forest Stewardship Council and made especially for him by Marigaux in Paris.

Jacqueline Shave drew her love of chamber music from her time at the Britten-Pears School in Snape. On leaving the Royal Academy of Music she became leader of English Touring Opera, but soon made the decision to dedicate herself to chamber music, leading the Schubert Ensemble and co-founding and leading the Brindisi Quartet for 15 years.

She is in demand as a guest leader with many of the UK's leading orchestral ensembles and in 2005 she was appointed leader of the Britten Sinfonia. In 2013 she also became leader of the Red Note Ensemble, a contemporary music group in Glasgow. During a year out in 2011 to explore other musical pathways, she collaborated in a world music/jazz CD, presented a complete Beethoven String Quartet cycle on the Hebridean island of Harris and a free improvisation concert in a cave on Hestur in the North Atlantic Faroe Islands.

Jacqueline is also a composer and recently had a piece premiered in London by the Britten Sinfonia and tenor Nicholas Mulroy entitled 'Three Landscapes' for oboe quartet and voice set to poems by Laurie Lee, Clifford Dyment and WB Yeats.

Jacqueline plays on a Nicola Amati violin from 1672.

Clare Finimore was inspired to begin studying the violin after hearing a professional string quartet perform live at her primary school. While still a student she co-founded and was principal viola of the Guildhall String Ensemble. The group were international prize winners and toured for the next 20 years, frequently broadcasting on BBC Radio 3 and appearing on Blue Peter and Omnibus. For the last 12 years Clare has been principal viola with the Britten Sinfonia.

As a soloist Clare has performed at the Aldeburgh, Brighton and Malvern Festivals, at the Wigmore Hall and throughout the USA. She is proud to be one of about 90 session musicians on the soundtracks to films such as Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy, The Hobbit and Skyfall. She has played live with Sting, Bjork, Kylie Minogue, Florence and the Machine, Kiki Dee and Carmelo Luggeri.

Clare's viola is 'unknown', possibly Italian or Flemish and dated 1685.

Caroline Dearnley has been principal cello with the Britten Sinfonia since 1992. She gave the British premier of Poul Ruders's Cello Concerto with the orchestra in 2001 and is a member of the Britten Sinfonia Soloists, with ground-breaking residencies in Krakow, Cambridge, Norwich, Birmingham and the Wigmore Hall. However, she is probably best known as a chamber musician and soloist, performing and recording chamber music with many leading ensembles.

Caroline plays a Milanese cello, dated 1740. She lives in London with her musician husband and their two daughters.

(Biographical notes compiled by Sarah Warnes)

CLUB NOTES

TEA & COFFEE SERVICE

Over the past two concerts, the Club has been working with Outside the Box, the Ilkley charity which supports adults with a learning disability to lead more fulfilled and independent lives, to enable them to support our interval tea and coffee service. There have naturally been some glitches during this period, but we are sure that Club members will want to encourage this development and not give way to their inner 'grouch' by taking out any frustration they feel at perceived inadequacies on the volunteers!

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Chris Skidmore (Chairman of ICC)

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Moeran: A well recorded Chandos, medium price, CD (CHAN 10170X) includes the Fantasy Quartet, String Quartet no.1, and the Violin Sonata. The Fantasy Quartet is performed by Sarah Francis (oboe) and members of the English String Quartet.

Rodney Bennett: I can find no current commercial recording of this work.

Françaix, Knussen & Mozart: An excellent recording, made in 2016 by the Britten Oboe Quartet, includes these three works. The CD is full price from Harmonia Mundi (HMM 907672), and also includes Britten's Phantasy op 2 Oboe Quartet.

J.S. Bach: The Goldberg Variations were written for a keyboard instrument, and are usually recorded on a Harpsichord or Piano. However, arrangements for various instruments, and combinations of instruments, have appeared over the years, and Brilliant Classics, at a super budget price, demonstrates some of these. The 4 disc set (94621) includes performances for Harpsichord, Piano, Organ and, like tonight's performance, Sitkovetsky's arrangement for String Trio, whilst a single disc (95591) has an arrangement for Recorder Quintet by the group 'Seldom Sene'. The organ CD has a particularly beautiful sound, and all five discs are available for around the price of one full price CD.

Raymond Waud. raynaud@gmail.com

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PIXELS ENSEMBLE



Debussy Sonata for cello and piano

Mozart Flute Quartet in D major, K285

Debussy Sonata for flute, viola and harp

Françaix Quintet no. 1 for flute, harp and string trio

Debussy Sonata for violin and piano

Mozart Piano Quartet in G minor, K478

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