

# Entente Musicale

Lunchtime concerts of enticing French and English chamber music  
at St John's Smith Square, London SW1P in October 2020



ST JOHN'S SMITH SQUARE

[www.sjss.org.uk](http://www.sjss.org.uk)

MARK BEBBINGTON piano

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

JAN LATHAM-KOENIG conductor

featuring RODERICK WILLIAMS baritone  
(2nd October only)



THE MASKED BALL

Music by Poulenc and Satie  
Friday 2nd October 2020, 1pm

STRINGS ATTACHED

English music for piano and strings  
Wednesday 21st October 2020, 1pm



## ENTENTE MUSICALE II: STRINGS ATTACHED

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020, 1pm  
St John's Smith Square

Mark Bebbington, piano  
Members of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra  
Jan Latham-Koenig, conductor

Finzi  
*Eclogue*

Robert Matthew-Walker  
*Concertante on a Theme of Paganini  
for piano and double string orchestra op. 168*

Doreen Carwithen  
*Concerto for Piano and Strings*

There will be no interval

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## **GERALD FINZI (1901–1956)**

### **Eclogue Op. 10**

This short expression of what Edmund Rubbra called ‘untroubled serenity’ was originally intended to be the slow movement following the Grand Fantasia of 1928-9, itself planned as part of a concerto for piano and strings. Finzi revised it in 1952 but it was not played or published until 1957, the year after his early death. It was first performed by Kathleen Long and the Kalmar Orchestra at a concert at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Well described by Diana McVeigh, Finzi’s biographer, as ‘large and serious in spirit, a rapt but not untroubled meditation’, the piece has thematic connections to other works by Finzi including *Dies natalis* and some of the songs in his Hardy song-cycle *A Young Man’s Exhortation*. The name ‘eclogue’, conferred posthumously by the publisher, is an archaic term for pastoral dialogue in poetry, usually between shepherds.

© Bruce Phillips

## **ROBERT MATTHEW-WALKER (b. 1939)**

### **Concertante on a Theme of Paganini**

#### **for piano and double string orchestra Op. 168 (2020)**

**\*\*World premiere performance\*\***

This work has had a long and labyrinthine gestation. It was begun as a gesture for Cyril Smith, whose recording of Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* is the finest to have been captured for the gramophone, second only to Rachmaninoff's own. After Smith's tragic stroke in 1956 I wanted to write something for him, for the right hand alone, and began jotting down a few ideas based on the well-known Paganini *A minor Caprice*, but although my teenage notion was well-intended, it would have meant nothing at the time. Nonetheless, I felt I had one or two good ideas, which stayed with me and which I began to expand later into a new work for piano and strings. In 1959, I showed the unfinished manuscript to Robert Simpson, who asked if I would be able to play it myself and, if so, he would arrange a performance conducted by Bryan Fairfax with the Polyphonia Orchestra. But I was called up for Army service a few months later: the plan came to nothing and my work remained unfinished. I always intended to return to it but a suitable opportunity never arose.

In 2017, Mark Bebbington asked me about British works for piano and strings. He had recorded Finzi's *Eclogue* and Rawsthorne's *First Concerto*; but he wanted a new work to go with other pieces we were discussing, and asked if I would write something for him. I mentioned the unfinished *Concertante* but wondered if he would prefer it for two hands and double string orchestra. He did, so I returned to my ideas for the 1959 *Concertante*, removing the percussion and keeping the original intention of a big fantasia-like piece based broadly on the Paganini theme, completely rewriting the first ideas and melding everything together.

I finished the final score on May 14<sup>th</sup> 2020. The work is in one movement, in four continuous sections. As the music progresses, Paganini's theme is heard less, fading into the distance, as music arising from it – in varying degrees of variation – takes over. There are no numbered 'variations' (as Rachmaninoff's and Brahms's) but Paganini's theme is there, either in the foreground or receding in the background.

It is not a *concerto* of course: the word *concertante* ideally describes the nature of the work. The music's character is almost entirely light-hearted; it is meant to be enjoyed (with one or two serious moments) and there is a quotation which would not be difficult for knowledgeable listeners to identify.

A recording by Mark Bebbington and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra is scheduled for 2021, for release by SOMM Records. It is extraordinary that the work's first ideas arose 64 years ago for Cyril Smith: Mark, the dedicatee of my *Concertante*, studied with Phyllis Sellick, Cyril's wife, and the recording producer is Siva Oke of SOMM Records – herself a pupil of Cyril Smith. What goes around, comes around.

© Robert Matthew-Walker

### **DOREEN CARWITHEN (1922-2003)** **Concerto for piano and string orchestra**

Doreen Mary Carwithen was born in Haddenham, Buckinghamshire, the elder daughter of an accountant who conducted the local church choir, and his wife, Dulcie, who had studied piano at the Tobias Matthay School and had intended becoming a concert pianist but took up teaching instead. Doreen started learning the piano from her mother at the age of four and then went on to the violin, which she abandoned in favour of the cello, studying for four years with Peers Coetmore, later the wife of E. J. Moeran. Her first composition, a setting of Wordsworth's 'Daffodils', was written when she was sixteen, and in 1941 she enrolled at the Royal Academy of Music, where she studied piano, cello, harmony and composition, one of her teachers being the composer William Alwyn. Her brilliant overture *ODTAA (One Damn Thing After Another)* received its first performance in 1947, the year in which she won a place on the J. Arthur Rank Apprenticeship Scheme studying the craft of film music. One of her first assignments was to assist Arnold Bax while he was writing the music for David Lean's classic version of *Oliver Twist*, and she went on to compose the scores for over thirty films herself as well as several concert works for orchestra, two string quartets, a violin sonata, and piano music. (Mark Bebbington has recorded her *Sonatina*, available on SOMMCD 0133, with works by Alwyn.) In 1961 she became her former teacher's second wife and, having always disliked the name Doreen, started calling herself Mary Alwyn.

Her most substantial orchestral score, the **Concerto for piano and string orchestra**, was begun in 1946 and completed two years later. A BBC advisory panel consisting of Edmund Rubbra, Lennox Berkeley and Alwyn himself recommended it for broadcasting, and Maurice Johnstone, director of the BBC Northern Home Service,

arranged for it to be played in October 1951 in the programme *Orchestral Hour*. Two months later the pianist Thomas Bromley and the BBC Northern Orchestra again played it on air, and Johnstone pressed its claims as a work suitable for performance at a Promenade concert: 'It is certainly one of the most attractive pieces by a youngster that I have heard for a long time — a rough description might be to say that Rachmaninoff might have written it if he had belonged to the same stable as Vaughan Williams or Moeran'. (The mention of Rachmaninoff reminds us that several films made in the 1940s contain pastiche works for piano and orchestra, such as Addinsell's *Warsaw Concerto*, Bath's *Cornish Rhapsody*, and Williams's *The Dream of Olwen*.) Johnstone's recommendation was accepted, and Carwithen's concerto opened the second half of a Prom given at the Royal Albert Hall on 25 August 1952 by the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Trevor Harvey, with Iris Loveridge as the soloist.

The opening *Allegro assai* opens vigorously, with stark, angular piano writing and sparse string textures. The music then dies away, and the piano introduces a contrasting, lyrical subject which leads into what the composer describes as a 'quasi-cadenza'. Development and recapitulation of the material follow in accordance with classical 'sonata form'. The slow movement (*Lento*) is dominated by a duet (to use Carwithen's own word) between the piano and a solo violin, which enters in the third bar accompanied by muted strings. The violin's free and sinuous melodic line contrasts with the piano's first entry in which the theme begins slowly in the bass surrounded by thick chords. The tranquil close of this beautiful movement is followed by a complete change of mood in the finale, marked *Moderato deciso con moto*, which begins with the two principal thematic ideas heard simultaneously and described by the composer as 'a broad, chordal melody played by the strings against a rising scale passage on the piano'. An extended cadenza for the soloist leads into a coda that begins quietly with the strings playing their initial melody against trills on the piano before the music starts on its inexorable progress to a triumphal ending.

© Graham Parlett

## MARK BEBBINGTON, PIANO

The critical plaudits which have greeted Mark Bebbington's performances and recordings have singled him out as a British pianist of the rarest refinement and maturity ("Bebbington is without doubt one of Britain's finest pianists." wrote Michel Fleury recently in *Classica*).

Internationally recognised as a champion of British music, in particular, Mark has recorded extensively for the Somm label to critical acclaim, with no fewer than nine of his recent CDs awarded 5\*\*\*\*\* by BBC Music Magazine. His most recent CDs include three British Piano Concertos with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, an all-Gershwin album with Leon Botstein and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra ('Recording of the Month' from MusicWeb International). A CD of Concertos by Grieg (including the premiere of his sketches for a Second Piano Concerto, edited by Robert Matthew-Walker) and Delius with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Jan Latham-Koenig was released in April 2018 and became 'CD of the Week' in *The Times* and *Mail on Sunday*.

His premiere recordings include one of Arnold Bax's Piano Concertino coupled with John Ireland's Piano Concerto and *Legend*, and premieres of Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia* and William Mathias's first two Piano Concertos (Ulster Orchestra). In addition to concerto recordings, Mark completed his John Ireland and Frank Bridge solo piano series and released a CD of piano works by William Alwyn in 2017. As well as his BBC Music Magazine success, he has won Gramophone Magazine's 'Editor's Choice' International Record Review's 'Outstanding' accolade and many others. *International Piano Magazine* wrote of him, "Bebbington's revivals of British piano music are second to none; he could well be dubbed the concert pianists' Richard Hickox. Bebbington has almost single-handedly demonstrated that 20th-century British piano scores have an exciting role to play in the concert hall and recording studio".

Over recent seasons Mark has toured throughout Central and Northern Europe and in the United States (both as recitalist and as soloist with some of the world's leading orchestras), as well as the Far East and North Africa. In 2017 he made his Carnegie Hall debut with Leon Botstein and the American Symphony Orchestra and also appeared with the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra and on tour with the Israel Camerata and Czech National Orchestra. Within the UK, he has appeared in concertos with the London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic and Philharmonia Orchestras, Flanders Symphony Orchestra, the London Mozart Players, Orchestra of the Swan and BBC Concert Orchestra. He has featured both as soloist and recitalist on BBC Television and Radio and also on major European Television and Radio networks.

Mark studied at the Royal College of Music where he was a recipient of numerous international awards and prizes, including a Leverhulme Scholarship, a Winston Churchill Fellowship and the Ivan Sutton Recording Prize – the latter awarded to the one outstanding graduate of the combined London Music Colleges. He later studied in Italy with the legendary Aldo Ciccolini.

Mark's programming demonstrates a commitment to the music of our time and he regularly includes contemporary composers as diverse as Takemitsu, Julian Anderson, John McCabe, David Matthews, Pierre Boulez and Elliot Carter in his recital series.

[www.markbebbington.co.uk](http://www.markbebbington.co.uk)

## **JAN LATHAM-KOENIG, CONDUCTOR**

Jan Latham-Koenig studied at the Royal College of Music in London and started his career as a pianist, before he decided to devote himself wholly to conducting. From 1989 to 1992, he was music director of the Orchestra of Porto, which he founded at the request of the Portuguese government.

In 1988, he made a sensational debut as an opera conductor with Macbeth at the Vienna State Opera and became its permanent guest conductor from 1991. He now regularly conducts in the world's leading opera houses, including Covent Garden, the Opéra National Paris-Bastille and the operas of Berlin, Hamburg, Rome, Lisbon and Santiago in Chile.

Jan Latham-Koenig was Music Director of both the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg and Opéra National du Rhin from 1997 to 2002. In 2005, he was appointed Music Director at the Teatro Massimo in Palermo, the first British conductor to hold such a post at one of the major Italian theatres.

From 2007 to 2010 Jan Latham-Koenig was Music Director at the Teatro Municipal of Santiago in Chile. In different years he enjoyed directorship with the Wrocław Symphony Orchestra in Poland, the Wroclavia Cantans International Festival, artistic directorship of the Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte di Montepulciano and of the Young Janacek Philharmonic; he was also Principal Guest Conductor of the Filarmonica del Teatro Regio in Turin; Artistic Director of the Orquesta Filarmónica de la UNAM in Mexico City (2012–2015). From 2013, he was Artistic Director of the Flanders Symphony Orchestra in Bruges (Belgium).

Jan Latham-Koenig is greatly in demand as a guest conductor. He has appeared with orchestras worldwide and performs regularly in Italy, including with the orchestras of the Teatro Comunale in Florence, RAI Turin and the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome. Recent appearances include the Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa, New Japan Philharmonic and Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, and in China the Beijing Symphony Orchestra, Hangzhou and Qingdao Philharmonic. He has conducted the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Dresden Philharmonic and Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

Jan Latham-Koenig started to work with the Novaya Opera Theatre in 2008 when he conducted the Kasper Holten production of Wagner's Lohengrin. In April 2011, he was

appointed Chief Conductor of the Novaya Opera. Since January 2019, he has been chief guest conductor of the theatre. Since March 2013 he has been acting as the Head of the Artistic Board, and he has participated in the company's tours throughout the world.



As the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) approaches its seventy-fifth anniversary in 2021, its mission to enrich lives through orchestral experiences that are uncompromising in their excellence and inclusive in their appeal, places the RPO at the forefront of music-making in the UK. Performing approximately 200 concerts each season and with a worldwide audience of more than half-a-million people, the Orchestra embraces a broad repertoire that enables it to reach the most diverse audience of any British symphony orchestra. Whilst artistic integrity remains paramount, the RPO is unafraid to push boundaries and is equally at home recording video game, film and television soundtracks and working with pop stars, as it is performing the great symphonic repertoire.

The RPO collaborates with the most inspiring artists and looks forward to welcoming its new Music Director, Vasily Petrenko, in September 2021. Vasily Petrenko will join a roster of titled conductors that includes Pinchas Zukerman (Principal Guest Conductor), Alexander Shelley (Principal Associate Conductor) and Grzegorz Nowak (Permanent Associate Conductor).

Cadogan Hall in London has been the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's home since 2004. Here it performs an annual season of concerts, many of which are subsequently toured to its seven principal residency venues. In addition, the Orchestra promotes more than forty-five concerts each season at partnership venues across the country, several of which are in areas where access to live orchestral music is very limited. In London, the Orchestra also promotes a season of symphonic concerts at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall and a popular series at the iconic Royal Albert Hall, where it has recently been appointed as the Hall's Associate Orchestra.

The RPO is recognised as being the UK's most in-demand orchestra, an accolade that would have pleased Sir Thomas Beecham, who founded the RPO in 1946. His mission was to lead a vital revival of UK orchestras after World War II and form an ensemble that comprised the finest musicians in the country. The Orchestra has since attracted a glittering list of principal conductors, including Rudolf Kempe, Antal Doráti, Walter Weller, André Previn, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Yuri Temirkanov, Daniele Gatti and Charles Dutoit.

The RPO aims to place orchestral music at the heart of contemporary society, collaborating with creative partners to foster a deeper engagement with communities to ensure that live orchestral music is accessible to as inclusive and diverse an audience as possible. To achieve this, in 1993 the Orchestra launched RPO Resound, which has grown to become the most innovative and respected orchestral community and education programme in the UK and internationally. The programme delivers bespoke, pioneering education, community and talent development projects to a wide range of participant groups, including homeless people, children, young people and stroke survivors, always with the overarching objective to leave a lasting legacy.

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra has always been entrepreneurial and in 1986 it was the first UK orchestra to launch its own record label. The RPO has gone on to embrace advances in digital technology and now achieves nearly thirty million downloads of its recorded music each year. The Orchestra is increasingly active online ([www.rpo.co.uk](http://www.rpo.co.uk)) and on social media (@rpoonline) providing audiences with the opportunity to engage with the RPO and enjoy 'behind-the-scenes' film clips and photographs.

Passion, versatility and uncompromising artistic standards are the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's hallmarks, and as it looks forward to an exciting future with its new Music Director, Vasily Petrenko, it will continue to be recognised as one of the world's most open-minded, forward-thinking and accessible symphony orchestras.

[www.rpo.co.uk](http://www.rpo.co.uk)

*FIRST VIOLINS*

Duncan Riddell  
Shana Douglas  
Esther Kim  
Joana Valentinaviciute

*VIOLAS*

Abigail Fenna  
Liz Varlow  
Chian Lim  
Esther Harling

*SECOND VIOLINS*

Andrew Storey  
Elen Hâf Rideal  
David O'Leary  
Jennifer Christie

*CELLOS*

Richard Harwood  
Jonathan Ayling  
Chantal Webster  
Roberto Sorrentino

*DOUBLE BASSES*

Benjamin Cunningham  
Ben Wolstenholme