



Guildhall Chamber Orchestra

Joshua Weilerstein conductor

Laura Fleur soprano

Innocent Masuku tenor

Jack Holton baritone

Friday 23 October, 7.30pm

Programme

Caroline Shaw *Entr'acte* (arranged for string orchestra)

Prokofiev *Symphony No 1, 'Classical'*

1. *Allegro*

2. *Larghetto*

3. *Gavotte: Non troppo allegro*

4. *Finale: Molto vivace*

Stravinsky *Pulcinella*

This concert was performed in Milton Court Concert Hall on Wednesday 21 October 2020 without an audience. It was recorded and produced live by Guildhall School's Recording & Audio Visual department.

Guildhall Chamber Orchestra

Violin 1

Ionel Manciu*^

Gabriela Opacka

Ray Liu

Hana Mizuta-Spencer

Maria Ismini Anastasiadou

Tuulia Hero

Violin 2

Eva Aronian*^

Millie Ashton

Yuriko Matsuda

Jeff Wu

Krystof Kohout

Viola

Matt Johnstone*^

Aleksandra Lipke

Theodore Chung

Freya Hicks

Cello

Leo Popplewell*^

Pierpaolo Greco

Lavinnia Rae

Double Bass

Catharina Feyen*^

Fabián Galeana

Flute

Stefan Cunningham*

Nicola Stevenson

Oboe

Emily Crichton*

Charis Lai

Clarinet

Cara Doyle*

Michael Madigan

Bassoon

Lucy Gibson*

Thaïs Bordes

Horn

Jake Parker*

Michael Hofman

Trumpet

Lucas Houldcroft*

Louis Grao

Trombone

Sam Gale

Timpani

Tom Hodgson

* *Section principal*

^ *Stravinsky Concertino soloist*

Programme notes

Caroline Shaw (born 1982)

Entr'acte (2011, arr. 2014 for string orchestra)

New York-based composer, vocalist and violinist Caroline Shaw has the unique distinction of both winning a Pulitzer Prize – in 2013, for her *a cappella* piece *Partita for 8 Voices* – and featuring on several tracks with Kanye West. Which is no surprise for someone who admires musicians as apparently incompatible as ‘Buxtehude and [rapper] Childish Gambino, and Adele and [French ‘spectralist’ composer] Gérard Grisey’.

Another enthusiasm – one that goes back to her childhood – is the string quartet. ‘It’s an amazing way to converse musically with others,’ Shaw observes, ‘and you can really get a sense of someone’s personality through reading a quartet with them for the first time.’ It was a performance of Haydn’s final quartet (Op. 77 No. 2 in F major) that prompted her to compose her *Entr'acte* in 2011. Three years later she transcribed her piece for string orchestra. ‘It is structured like a minuet and trio,’ she says, ‘riffing on that Classical form but taking it a little further.’

The clear structure and much of the musical fabric stem confidently from the Classical period and earlier (making *Entr'acte* a complement to tonight’s two other neo-Classical pieces), but effects such as creating a noise (rather than a pitch) with the bow, or plucking while a string is stopped by the bow, or pitch-bending, come squarely from our own time. Intriguingly, it is the brief transitions – the linking passages between sections – that steal the show in terms of freedom and unpredictability. Could this be the key to the work’s title –the musical spirit that lies *between* the sections rather than within them?

At the end, after the opening music returns, the violins dissolve upwards, leaving a solitary cello gently plucking ‘like recalling fragments of an old tune or story’.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)

Symphony No 1 in D major, Op 25 'Classical' (1916–17)

1. *Allegro*

2. *Larghetto*

3. *Gavotta: Non troppo allegro*

4. *Finale: Molto vivace*

Like Stravinsky just before him, Prokofiev gained early notoriety as an *enfant terrible* – a card-carrying modernist with an acerbic wit and hitherto unheard-of rhythmic drive and complexity. But, in his mid-twenties, having completed his radical first two piano concertos, he turned spontaneously to the idea of a 20th-century symphony as seen through the eyes of Haydn. “It seemed to me that, had Haydn lived to our day,” Prokofiev noted, “he would have retained his own style while accepting something of the new at the same time. This was the kind of symphony I wanted to write: a symphony in the Classical style. And when I saw that my idea was starting to work, I called it the ‘Classical’ Symphony: in the first place because that was simpler, and secondly, for the fun of it – to ‘tease the geese’ – and in the secret hope that I would prove to be right if the symphony really did turn out to be a classic.”

The fresh, bracing first movement recalls Haydn’s wit, not least in its second theme, where light, balletic violins nonchalantly skip over a tick-tocking bass line. Floating high strings – marked *molto dolce* (very sweetly) – are the main feature of the second-movement *Larghetto*, while the alternating episodes offer a gentle strumming effect.

It’s a sign of his pragmatism that Prokofiev later incorporated the Gavotte into his ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, at the point where the guests leave the Capulets’ ball. In its original symphonic guise, it carries an air of mocking stylisation, as if wigged and made up for the occasion. In the finale, Prokofiev set himself the task of not allowing any minor chords: the movement fizzles away in a manner that recalls the ebullience of Bizet’s *Symphony in C*, written 60 years earlier.

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

Pulcinella – ballet in one act with three solo voices, after Giambattista Pergolesi (1919–20, rev. 1965)

If, in these constraining times, we're looking for a work to strike a note of optimism, *Pulcinella* fits the bill. It was commissioned by the impresario Serge Diaghilev, for whom Stravinsky had written his earlier hit ballets, *The Firebird*, *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring*. In the same way that we are now exploring a cautious return to live performance, Diaghilev was looking to re-establish his company the Ballet Russes after the ravages of the First World War.

In *Pulcinella*, Stravinsky returned to the subject of *Petrushka*, a Russian variant of the hook-nosed Italian *commedia dell'arte* figure (Punch in English). Pursued by the girls Prudenza and Rosetta, Pulcinella is targeted by their jealous boyfriends, Florindo and Cloviello. Pre-empting an attack, he employs a double, who only feigns death, thereby allowing Pulcinella, disguised as a magician, to revive the body. Meanwhile, Florindo and Cloviello appear to their girlfriends dressed as Pulcinella in the hope of a more favourable amorous reaction. The real Pulcinella intervenes but is magnanimous, and at the end of the ballet the three couples are married, with Pulcinella taking Pimpinella as his wife.

Comprising an overture and 20 short movements, the music reflects one of Stravinsky's earliest preoccupations with neo-Classicism – exploring the music of the past as a key to a new style. Diaghilev passed to Stravinsky a number of pieces he believed to be by the 18th-century Neapolitan composer Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (around half of the pieces have since been found to be by other composers). Stravinsky largely retained the bass lines and melodies of the individual pieces, adding his own harmonies and rhythmic invention. At the same time, he showed admirable restraint: “The remarkable thing about *Pulcinella*,” Stravinsky said, “is not how much but how little has been added or changed.”

Programme notes © Edward Bhesania

Biographies

Joshua Weilerstein



Joshua Weilerstein is the Artistic Director of the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, and enjoys a flourishing guest conducting career with ensembles such as Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Munich Chamber Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, New York Philharmonic, and the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Detroit and Milwaukee.

Joshua's formative experience with classical music was as a violinist on tour to Panama and Guatemala with the Youth Philharmonic Orchestra of Boston, where the orchestra performed for thousands of young people who had never heard a live orchestra concert. This sparked a desire in Joshua to pursue a career in classical music. He gained a Master's degree in violin and conducting at the New England Conservatory, and was subsequently appointed as Assistant Conductor of the New York Philharmonic.

Joshua is committed to programming both traditional and contemporary repertoire, endeavouring to present music from under-represented composers at each concert. He hosts a podcast 'Sticky Notes' for music lovers and newcomers alike, and is an advocate for easy communication between the audience and the concert stage.

Laura Fleur Hocking



Laura Fleur is currently studying with Susan Waters on the Guildhall School Opera Course, having previously graduated from the Royal College of Music with a first class honours Bachelor of Music and a Master of Performance with distinction.

Laura's recent concert work includes a concert tour of *Così fan tutte* with Classical Opera and The Mozartists, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Bach Cantatas with the London Handel Orchestra and performing at Leeds Lieder Festival as a young artist. Her operatic experience includes Mrs Kneebone in *A Dinner Engagement* for the Royal College of Music, the title role in *Dido and Aeneas* for Hurn Court Opera, Melanto in *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* at Suffolk Villages Festival, Nerone in the New Renaissance Collective's production of *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, Amastre in Cavalli's *Xerse* with Ensemble Orquesta, contemporary opera premieres including Angelica in Lara Poe's *The Fermi Paradox*, and Embryo 3 in Sophie Sparkes' *Our Perfect Child* for RCM/Tête-à-tête. This year Laura was an Alvarez Young Artist with Garsington Opera, in which she was cast to cover Second Nymph in *Rusalka*.

Laura is supported by the Wax Chandlers' Scholarship, The Margery and Frederick Stephen Wright Eisinger Award, a Help Musicians Sybil Tutton Award and the Pimlott Foundation.

Innocent Masuku



Nkululeko Masuku is a South African operatic tenor, born in Piet Retief in 1990. He won a Merit award in The Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO) Awards and trained at Tshwane University of Technology where he performed in productions of Gounot's *Faust*, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and was tenor soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* and Rossini's *Messe Solennelle*.

He gained a place as a studio member of Cape Town Opera and made his first appearances on a professional stage in the roles of Crabman in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, Ernesto in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, and as tenor

soloist in *Carmina Burana*. He has participated in masterclasses with Kamal Khan and Willard White.

Since moving to the UK, Innocent has performed with Grange Park Opera as Mingo in *Porgy and Bess*, and covered the role of Nelson with English National Opera. He is currently studying on the Guildhall School Opera Course with Adrian Thompson and is supported by the Love MacDonald Scholarship, the Leverhulme Arts Scholarship, the Tillet Trust and Kolin Keer, and the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust.

Jack Holton



Originally from North Kent, baritone Jack Holton is currently studying on the Guildhall School Opera Course with John Evans, having gained a BMus and MMus in Vocal Studies from Guildhall.

In 2019, Jack's opera roles included Count Anckarström in *Un ballo in Maschera* as an Opera Holland Park Young Artist, Sky Masterson in *Guys & Dolls* for West Green House Opera, Mr Jedermann (cover) in *Scoring a Century* for British Youth Opera, and Don Giovanni for Rogue Opera. Jack was also a chorus member for Wexford Festival Opera's productions of *The Veiled Prophet*, *La Cucina / Adina* and *Don Quichotte* and performed the role of 3rd Bandit in *Don Quichotte*.

Early this year, Jack played the title role in The Merry Opera Company's production of *Don Giovanni*, and this summer he was due to be performing La Poigne in Opera Holland Park's *Margot la Rouge* and the title role in *Gianni Schicchi* with British Youth Opera.

Jack is the grateful recipient of the Anne Pashley Opera Scholarship and The Gita Furber Scholarship. This year he was also awarded an Opera Awards Foundation Bursary.

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