

RIPON CONCERTS

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2019-20
Jubilee Season



From the Brandenburgs to the 20th Century

The 10/6 Chamber Ensemble

Monday 13 January 2020, 7.30pm
Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Programme

www.riponconcerts.co.uk

Welcome

We are delighted to be starting 2020 with the launch of a brand new chamber ensemble. 10/6 was conceived on the back of a particular programme request by Brian Kealy and the idea has developed into creating a flexible ensemble capable of playing music written for different combinations of instruments including scaled-down versions of symphonic works. The venture builds on Ripon's wonderful musical traditions and the name harks back to *Alice in Wonderland* which roots the project in the city. A detailed background to the idea behind the ensemble can be found in the biography later in the programme.

Many of you will be aware of our difficulties over a suitable venue for our concerts and in particular our continuing use of the Cathedral. This embraces short- and long-term questions. In the short term we are working round the restoration work being done in the quire and using both Holy Trinity and in February trying a new venue in the Cathedral crossing. In the long term

anxieties have been raised by the Dean about the changes that we have made to the layout of the quire on concert days. We have been victims of our own success and have had to increase capacity by bringing in more chairs. This has challenged the sacred and spiritual nature of the quire and may have accelerated damage to the floor.

The siting of the February concert is a trial and we will be looking for feedback from members and regular concert supporters as to whether this might be a suitable and satisfactory alternative location within the Cathedral.

We are very grateful to Holy Trinity for their support this season and are reassured that if this became our home in the future it would be an excellent concert venue. If this were to happen, we would of course still be able to use the Cathedral nave for concerts expected to attract a very large audience.

My very best wishes for 2020.

Roger Higson, Chairman

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And any others who have donated to the Society since this programme went to press.

From the Brandenburgs to the 20th Century

The 10/6 Chamber Ensemble

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3
in G BWV 1048

Violins - Winona Fifield, Nadiia Ivkovs, Chloe Fletcher
Violas - Joanna Wesling, Fiona Allinson, Richard Fletcher
Cellos - George Kennaway, Helen Dawson, Jeremy Carnall
Double Bass - Pietro Lusvardi
Harpsichord - Keith Dale

Johann Sebastian Bach

Brandenburg Concerto No. 6
in B flat BWV 1051

Viola da Braccio - Joanna Wesling, Fiona Allinson,
Cello - George Kennaway
Viola da Gamba - Helen Dawson, Jeremy Carnall
Double bass - Pietro Lusvardi
Harpsichord - Keith Dale

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

Trauermusik (1936)

Langsam • Ruhig bewegt • Lebhaft • Choral: Für deinen Thron tret ich hiermit - Sehr langsam

Viola Solo - Joanna Wesling
Violins - Winona Fifield, Nadiia Ivkovs, Chloe Fletcher, Janet Nicholas
Violas - Fiona Allinson, Richard Fletcher
Cellos - George Kennaway, Helen Dawson
Double Bass - Pietro Lusvardi

- interval -

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Sextet No. 1 in B flat, Op. 18

Allegro ma non troppo • Andante ma moderato • Scherzo: Allegro molto • Rondo: Poco allegretto e grazioso

Violins - Winona Fifield, Nadiia Ivkovs
Violas - Joanna Wesling, Fiona Allinson
Cellos - George Kennaway, Helen Dawson



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About the music

This evening's concert is designed to showcase the range of sonorities and expression that can be obtained from what is basically just a group of strings.

Amazingly, much of Bach's huge legacy of compositions remained forgotten and unperformed for decades, even centuries after his death in 1750. It was not until the early 19th century that Bach's music began to rise in popularity, thanks to advocates such as Beethoven and Mendelssohn. Now widely considered among his masterpieces, the Brandenburg Concertos remained largely unknown for nearly a century after they were written.

In March 1719, when Bach was in Berlin to collect the new harpsichord made for Cöthen by court instrument maker Michael Mietke, he had occasion to play for Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg. The meeting spurred an invitation from the Margrave for Bach to send him some compositions. The works that he sent probably originated in Weimar even before Bach's move to Cöthen in 1717, but it took yet another two years for him to select, rewrite and submit his "*Six concerts avec plusieurs instruments*". The 1721 manuscript bears a fulsome dedication to the Margrave (no self-respecting Margrave would have been satisfied with less). No record exists of the Margrave ever using the scores, ever sending Bach a fee, or ever thanking him - indeed he may not have had the necessary range of instrumentalists available to his resources. The sheer variety of their scoring shows them to be examples rather than a practical set for routine performance. The manuscript eventually became the property of the state library in Berlin, remaining

unpublished until the Bach revival in the nineteenth century. In 1880 Philipp Spitta, Bach's famous biographer, coined the term "Brandenburg Concertos," which has been used ever since for the beloved works.

In most of his concerti Bach employed the simple yet flexible plan for the concerto grosso developed by Torelli and Corelli and standardised by Vivaldi - a small solo group (concertino) alternating with the full ensemble, typically in three movements: fast slow, fast, and four of the Brandenburg Concertos follow that pattern.

Tonight, however, we focus on the two which do not require wind players, only strings, and do not really have a concertino.

Though the **third Brandenburg Concerto** is scored only for strings and continuo (bass line instrument and keyboard), the texture is kaleidoscopic, with constant shifts between combinations of instruments. Bach's love of symmetry is apparent in his balancing of the three groups of strings - three violins, three violas and three cellos - and the three instrumental parts within each group. Unusually Bach did not provide a slow movement for this Concerto. In between the two fast movements Bach left a one-bar *Adagio* consisting of two cadential chords which is often preceded by a short cadenza played by either a violin or harpsichord.

The **sixth Brandenburg Concerto** is scored for seven instruments: two violas, two violas da gamba (similar to the modern cello), cello, violone (double bass) and harpsichord continuo, but no violins. It is (almost) a concerto for two violas. The scoring suggests that the work may have been composed with Bach's then employer

Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen and Bach himself as performers in mind. (The prince played the viola da gamba and Bach played everything else.) The two violas open the first movement with a vigorous subject in the form of a canon, and as the movement progresses, the other instruments are gradually drawn into a steady flow of melodic counterpoint. The second movement is basically a trio sonata for two violas and continuo, although the cello has a decorated version of the continuo bass line. The concerto concludes with a gigue, a baroque dance.

Paul Hindemith's *Trauermusik*, meaning 'mourning' or 'funeral music', is a suite for viola and string orchestra written overnight on 21 January 1936 at very short notice in memory of King George V who had died the previous night.

Hindemith was himself a famous concert violist and was in London to introduce and perform his own concerto known as *Der Schwanendreher* with Adrian Boult and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. However the day before the concert, on 20 January, the king died. The planned concert was postponed as it was decided that *Der Schwanendreher*, which was based on folk tunes, was not appropriate for a memorial concert.

However the BBC wanted Hindemith to be involved in any music that was to be broadcast and he was asked to compose something for the occasion. So the following day he worked from 11 am to 5 pm and produced *Trauermusik*. The work was rehearsed with the orchestra and on the same evening it was performed and broadcast live on the BBC radio, with Hindemith playing the solo viola part.

Trauermusik has four linked movements: *Langsam (Lento, Slow)*, *Ruhig bewegt (Poco mosso)*, *Lebhaft (Vivo, Lively)*, *Choral: Sehr langsam (Largo, Very slow)*. All this in only about six minutes.

A work of this length and intensity needs little explanation. Naturally it has a sad and solemn character and Hindemith, a great admirer of J. S. Bach, based the finale on a Lutheran chorale made familiar by Bach's harmonisation, entitled "*Vor deinen Thron tret' ich hiermit*", which means "Before Thy Throne I now appear", ('very suitable for kings,' as Hindemith himself noted). Here, the orchestra plays the four short phrases with the solo viola intervening with cadenza-like bars. (Incidentally it was the last tune that the dying Bach himself worked on.)

Brahms's two sextets for two violins, two violas and two cellos are relatively early works. The B flat first sextet was written in 1859 when Brahms was just 27, inspired, it is said, by Spohr's Sextet in C op. 140 which had been published in 1850. His delight in composition can be understood from the outset as he explores the unusual sonorities at his disposal. After the work's first performance Clara Schumann wrote in her diary, "It was even more beautiful than I had anticipated, and my expectations were already high."

The lyrical, meandering opening melody establishes the mood of an expansive *Allegro non troppo* which shows Brahms's interest in the use of across-the-bar phrases of irregular length used here with delightful and telling effect. The second theme has two distinct elements: a rhythmic theme with pizzicato interjections in the accompanying parts and an impassioned theme introduced by the

first cello. The development section is based on the first two themes, while the third comes into its own in the coda, with its delicate pizzicato ending.

The following *Andante* is a set of variations - another ancient form much loved by Brahms. This noble slow moment is a set of six variations on a sombre, elegiac theme in d minor. The music is wonderfully imagined for the forces available and seems to avoid textures that could be mistaken for those of the string quartet. In so doing Brahms tends to group the first viola with the two violins while the second viola "leads" the lower group.

A short *scherzo* follows which is both vigorous and pithy, characteristics which are continued into the trio section. Its similarity to the trio of the scherzo in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony has not escaped comment by critics. The final unhurried *Rondo* whose appealing refrain (like the first movement's opening theme) is introduced by the cello and owes not a little in spirit to the works of Schubert. As in the first movement the climax is reached in the vigorous development episode. The coda in gradually quickening speed is distinguished by its skilful use of pizzicato.



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10/6 Ensemble

10/6 is a newly-formed, North Yorkshire-based chamber ensemble set up by the viola player Joanna Wesling and Jeremy Carnall. The group draws on national and international musicians who are now based in North Yorkshire. The ensemble members are associated with both local and national orchestras including Northern Ballet, Opera North, BBC Philharmonic, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Dorset Opera Festival.

10/6 is a flexible chamber ensemble inspired by the Society for Private Musical Performances which was founded by Schoenberg in Vienna in 1918. Presented at these concerts was a mixture of solo, chamber and orchestral works. The chamber ensemble comprised around 10 players consisting of a handful of wind instruments, a string quintet, harmonium and piano. The idea of a chamber reduction of a large-scale orchestral work was one that fascinated Schoenberg, who argued that stripping away layers offered fresh perspectives on the composer's craft. The idea of combining chamber and orchestral works together is at the heart of 10/6. It allows for novel and interesting programme combinations which include from between six to ten musicians. The reduced size of the ensemble allows it to be very flexible in terms of venue and location. The ensemble plans to create educational concerts with pre-concert talks, open rehearsals, conversations with audience members and performances for children in new and unusual performance spaces. The group's aspirations, subject to funding, is to become an ensemble for the community and it aims to arrange performances in schools, hospices and care homes. Tonight's concert will be the inaugural concert given by 10/6.

THE PLAYERS

Jeremy Carnall – Director and Cello
music director of Dorset Opera Festival, previously resident conductor with Opera Leipzig

Winona Fifield – Violin
Academy of St Martin in the Fields and Northern Ballet Sinfonia

Nadiia Ivkova – Violin
formerly with the Symphony Orchestra of Kharkov and the National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, Ukraine

Chloe Fletcher – Violin
soloist and the Dales Ensemble

Joanna Wesling – Viola
15 years with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

Fiona Allinson – Viola
Pro Musica Knaresborough

Richard Fletcher – Viola
leader and soloist with the St Cecilia Orchestra and Dales Ensemble

George Kennaway – Cello
30 years with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Orchestra of Opera North

Helen Dawson – Cello
Kentish Opera orchestra and lead cellist in St Cecilia Orchestra

Pietro Lusvardi – Double Bass
played with Opera Dorset, Amici Ensemble, Northern Ballet and the BBC Philharmonic

Keith Dale – Harpsichord
included 15 years as the Organist & Director of Music at the Anglican Church of the Holy Trinity, Geneva, Switzerland



Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
- The (Mad) Hatter
Illustration by John Tenniel

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