

RIPON
CONCERTS

Chamber music with passion



Katherine Bryer – Oboe, with string trio

Music from Mozart to Britten

Monday 8 November 2021, 7.30pm
Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Programme

www.riponconcerts.co.uk

Patron: Julius Drake

Welcome

Monday 11 October 2021 was a very special day. Anna Tilbrook and The Marlborough Quartet banished Covid blues with their playing of works by Mahler, Mozart and Dvořák, and lifted everyone's spirits. The joy felt by musicians and audience alike was palpable.

How good it was to be back and with a five star concert!

Some members of the quintet had known each other since childhood and two had played instruments together since age 7. The importance and significance of being able to be together and make music again cannot be underestimated.

This evening we welcome a very talented group of young musicians at the start of their careers, who are supported by The Countess of Munster Trust.

The Trust was founded in 1958 by the Countess of Munster (Hilary Wilson), who devoted her life to music and was herself a pianist of considerable talent. Her generous endowment, from which the Trust's annual income is derived, currently provides awards totalling up to £240,000 to outstanding

young musicians to help them achieve their full potential by assisting with the cost of their studies. The Trust also provides a small number of instrument purchase loans to former beneficiaries and runs a Recital Scheme, which was launched in 1976 to provide professional performance opportunities for the most outstanding of the Trust's beneficiaries. We take part in the scheme this evening. Other new initiatives at the Trust have featured collaborations with the London Schools Symphony Orchestra and with the Bolton Music Hub. The aim of these initiatives is to help ensure that musical education and opportunities are available to school-age students who otherwise would not have the funds to access them.

Be prepared for something completely different in December, when a diverse group of musicians blends the passion and vitality of authentic Latin music with the smooth sound and virtuosity of the classical tradition.

Please note, this concert is on December 6th, which is THE FIRST MONDAY of the month.

Roger Higson, Chairman

Monday 8 November 2021 | Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Music from Mozart to Britten

Katherine Bryer – Oboe
Jessica Coleman – Violin
Marsailidh Groat – Viola
Donald Robinson – Cello



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Munster Musical Trust
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Programme

Wolfgang Amadè Mozart
(1756–1791)
Allegro • Adagio • Rondeau: Allegro

Oboe Quartet in F, K.370/368b

Robert Schumann (1810–1856) *Mondnacht* from *Liederkreis* Op. 39
arr. Colin Matthews (b. 1946)

Helen Grime (b. 1981) Oboe Quartet (2011)
– interval (no refreshments) –

W. A. Mozart Operatic highlights from *The Magic Flute*
arr. Gunther Joppig
Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja • Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) String Trio in B flat major, D. 471

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) Phantasy Quartet, Op. 2



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About the music

Anyone hearing a recent NADFAS lecture about the double reed instruments would be astonished that the raucous, Middle Eastern-sounding baroque oboe (not far removed from the medieval shawm) could have ever been sufficiently “tamed” as to satisfy such fastidious composers as Purcell, J. S. Bach and Mozart. Yet tamed it was and music of great subtlety and lyricism was soon being written for the classical instrument. Of course there were the good players and the better ones and it is the better ones, the players whose technique and mastery over their intractable instruments extended the expressive and virtuoso capabilities, who provided the spur to the great composers. For **Mozart** there were Anton Stadler on the clarinet, Ignaz Leigeb on the horn and Friedrich Ramm on the oboe. The best wind players tended to be found in the Mannheim orchestra and Ramm was no exception. Mozart met him there in 1777 and as well as becoming drinking companions, their friendship prompted Mozart’s (and his successors’) more adventurous use of the wind orchestra. This oboe quartet was an early fruit of the friendship. It is almost a concerto for oboe and strings, the oboe part with an exultant virtuosity and a top F which players before Ramm would not have risked (but essential for a work pitched in that key).

Robert Schumann wrote his *Liederkreis* Op. 39 to words by Eichendorff in the year of song 1840: *Mondnacht* (Moon Night) is probably the best known of its songs. Colin Matthews has recently transcribed it effectively for oboe quartet.

Helen Grime was born in Scotland in 1981. She studied oboe with John Anderson and

composition with Julian Anderson and Edwin Roxburgh at the Royal College of Music, graduating from the BMus course with First Class Honours and completing her Masters with Distinction in 2004. Since then her compositions have been played at prestigious venues by world-class orchestras and performers including the BBC Proms, Nicholas Daniel and Pierre Boulez. Her critically-acclaimed Oboe Quartet, commissioned by Winsor Music Inc. and premiered in Boston in 2012, was given its UK premiere by Nicholas Daniel and members of the Britten Sinfonia at the Wigmore Hall the following year.

Helen Grime writes:

My Oboe Quartet is essentially an abstract piece. This is somewhat unusual in my output, with many pieces taking extra-musical starting points. The stimulus for the piece sprang from my love of the oboe as well as an exploration of its relationship with the three string instruments. I studied the oboe alongside composition at the Royal College of Music in London, and although I rarely play anymore, I have retained a strong bond with the instrument. The piece is cast in one continuous movement although it falls into a number of shorter sections. The oboe is the protagonist throughout with the string trio set against it in a unit, sometimes opposing, sometimes shadowing, commenting or expanding upon on the oboe’s line. The character of music moves between plaintive, virtuosic and fantastical to reflective and somewhat melancholy. In the opening section, a gradually unfolding melody

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in the oboe is punctuated by gentle rocking figures in the trio. These two ideas interlock and overlap becoming more agitated and compressed before all instruments come together in a fantastical section. This leads to a faster energetic section with all instruments combining to produce an intense unison passage ending on repeated B flats on the oboe, the instrument's lowest note. This in turn leads to an extended oboe cadenza, which is interrupted by faster, *agitato* figures in the string trio. These interruptions become gradually quieter and less forceful, taking us into a very slow, calm final section featuring the high register of the oboe and delicate glissandi in the string writing.

Mozart suffered in his lifetime from arrangements made by other people of his popular music (as did Beethoven) and made nothing from the pirate versions. However the tunes are so good that many composers such as Beethoven and Liszt and the piano virtuosi made instrumental arrangements. There are well-known arrangements for wind band by Triebensee. Gunther Joppig, oboist and academic, made these arrangements of two well-known arias from *The Magic Flute* for oboe and flute but they work just as well with oboe and violin.

Schubert made three attempts at writing a string trio in B flat. The first has sunk with hardly a trace, the third (D 581) was complete, but the second (D471) only got as far as the first movement - there are fragments of what would have followed but only fragments. It is that single movement written in September 1814 that we shall hear tonight. Given the quantity and

quality of incomplete ("unfinished") works of Schubert's fairly short life, a sense of frustration must attend: what might have been? This is an amiable sonata-form movement for the three string players.

Britten composed his *Phantasy Quartet* at age 18 while still a student at the Royal College of Music. Such was his standing even at that early stage that he was able to dedicate it to the leading oboist of the day, Léon Goossens, and that Goossens gave it its first performance and that that performance was broadcast by the BBC. It was then performed in Florence for the International Society of Contemporary Music the following year, the first piece to win the composer international recognition.

It is a *phantasy* in the tradition of the works for string quartet promoted in the early years of the 20th century by Walter Willson Cobbett, a tradition embraced by most of the most prominent composers of the pre- and post-war period.

Britten's quartet is in the form of a 16th-century fantasy, in an arch form with elements from the sonata form. As in Mozart's Oboe Quartet, the oboe has a solo function. The music grows out of silence and in the end returns to silence. The first theme is a march, marked *molto pianissimo*. That theme becomes later also the source of themes in a fast section, similar to the development section of the sonata form. In the slow middle section, the strings alone introduce a theme in which the oboe joins. It is followed, in symmetry, by a recapitulation of the fast section, and then the march. It is an astonishingly assured piece to have emerged from the pen of an 18-year old student.

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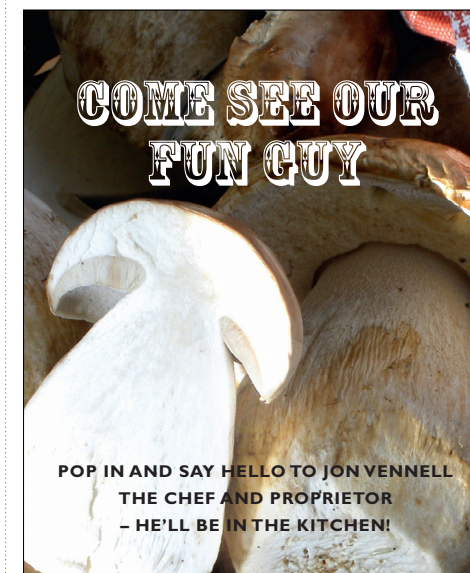
About the musicians

London-based oboist Katherine Bryer enjoys a varied career working as an orchestral, solo and chamber musician. She has held trials and appeared with orchestras including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra and Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Other orchestras with whom she has freelanced include the London Philharmonic Orchestra and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Recent highlights for Katherine in 2021 have included performances at The Cumnock Tryst Music Festival, Glyndebourne Festival, the BBC Proms, and the St Magnus International Festival.

Katherine completed her Bachelor's and MA degrees at the Royal Academy of Music, graduating with First Class in both. During her time at the Academy, Katherine studied with Christopher Cowie, Ian Hardwick and Celia Nicklin, and she was a two-time winner of the Barry Grimaldi Cor Anglais Prize, as well as winner of both the Leila Bull and Evelyn Rothwell/Barbirolli Oboe Prizes.

Katherine is a keen chamber musician, and in 2018 was selected as a Countess of Munster Musical Trust Recital Scheme Artist. Through this scheme she has enjoyed performing as both a soloist and in a duo with pianist Irena Radić and harpist Elizabeth Bass, as well as appearances with string and wind trios in recitals and festivals around the UK. Through the scheme Katherine formed an oboe quartet with violinist Jessica Coleman, violist Marsailidh Groat and cellist Donald Robinson. The quartet first met in Scotland when performing with the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, and since then they have each gone on to study at London

conservatoires and work with orchestras and ensembles including London Mozart Players, Southbank Sinfonia and Her Ensemble. Since forming as a quartet, they have enjoyed performing a wide variety of repertoire for music societies up and down the country and are looking forward to upcoming concerts this year.



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Artist profile



Katherine Bryer talked to Charles Monck of Ripon Concerts about her life in music.

When did you take up the oboe?

Though my parents encouraged me to play the piano from an early age, they were not musical themselves. At school, I wanted to learn the clarinet, but there were no instruments, so I took up the tuba. By the time I was 14, I was getting a bit bored of the tuba, so my aunt, who was an amateur oboe player herself, encouraged me to take up the oboe, and I have never looked back.

So when did you think seriously about specialising in music?

Music for me started to take off when I got the opportunity to spend my last two years in school in St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh. This is the only specialist music school in Scotland, comparable with The Purcell School and Chetham's School of Music. It was whilst I was there and playing

in the National Youth Orchestra that I met up with Jessica, Marsailidh and Donald who make up our oboe and string group. I was so lucky to get a place at the Royal College of Music; my other options of doing a conventional academic music degree, English literature or History were much less appealing.

Tell me about the Royal College of Music.

I spent six years in total: four years as an undergraduate, and two doing my master's. The combination of being surrounded by such gifted students, outstanding teachers and being in the centre of London provided me with the motivation, platform and contacts to become a performer. It was there that I started to freelance, mainly with London-based orchestras and chamber groups.

How important was the award from The Countess of Munster Trust?

They have been so wonderful. I got the award in 2018, but things took time to take off. And because of the lockdown, the benefits of the scheme have been extended. I would never have got the opportunity to perform with so many concert societies across the UK. They have provided me with a wonderful opportunity to develop as a soloist and perform chamber music, playing to music societies around the country, playing in various combinations: oboe and piano, oboe and harp, woodwind, and oboe and strings.

How have you survived lockdown?

Lockdown came within around three months of our first Countess of Munster engagement. But it's been much harder for those still at Music College. My biggest

problem was that when all live music came to an abrupt end, without a clear goal of an upcoming concert, I lacked the motivation to practise. Instead, I decided to take up cooking which has been very rewarding and learn German. I am so lucky to be in London, the heart of the musical scene. Since lockdown ended, life is now becoming really busy again.

Tell us how you put together the programme for Ripon Concerts?

Above all we wanted to provide variety, taking into account that the oboe repertoire is quite limited - particular amongst the 19th-century romantic composers. We start with the Mozart quartet, written for the oboe. The Schumann is a lovely setting for the oboe of a glorious Schumann song, *Mondnacht* from *Liederkreis*, arranged by Colin Matthews. We had to include Helen Grime's atmospheric Oboe Quartet - whilst I was at college, she came and tutored me on her quartet. Helen was a former pupil at St Mary's, Edinburgh and went on to study oboe and composition at the RCM. And the programme ends with Benjamin Britten's astonishing *Phantasy Quartet*, written when he was just 18.

Do you have a particular preference for a composer or type of music?

People always ask me who my favourite composer is. But I don't have a strong preference. I am currently into 20th-century and contemporary works and French composers - particularly Poulenc. But in building up a programme, we try to get the right balance; some compositions work better than others, so we are always refining our programmes and expanding our repertoire.

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