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CONCERTS

Chamber music with passion

Ferio

Saxophone Quartet



**“a fabulous foursome;
bar-raising musicianship
and sound”**

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Monday 12 December 2022, 7.30pm
Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Programme

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RIPON
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Chamber music with passion

Patron: Julius Drake

Monday 12 December 2022 | Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Ferio Saxophone Quartet

HUW WIGGIN – soprano sax
ELLIE McMURRAY – alto sax
ANTHONY BROWN – tenor sax
SHEVAUGHAN BEERE – baritone sax

Programme

Thierry Escaich: Tango Virtuoso

Domenico Gaetano Maria Donizetti, arr. Ferio:
Una Furtiva Lagrima from L'Elisir D'Amore

Astor Piazzolla, arr. Voirpy: Libertango

Johann Sebastian Bach, arr. Iain Farrington:
Fugue in G minor, BWV 578

Johann Sebastian Bach, arr. Iain Farrington:
Air from Suite no. 3 in D major, BWV 1068

Johann Sebastian Bach, arr. Tochio (I and III) and Ferio (II):
Italian Concerto, BWV 971

George Gershwin, arr. Nigel Wood: An American in Paris

- interval (refreshments) -

Leonard Bernstein, arr. Boatman: West Side Story Suite

George Bizet, arr. Iain Farrington: Suite from Carmen

Philip R. Buttall: The Lone Ar-ranger goes Sax Mad!

Chamber music with passion



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About the saxophone



Adolphe Sax, 1860s

Advances in metalworking and (in some quarters) a perceived need for an instrument which could span the whole of the musical spectrum with a consistent and uniform quality of sound led to the invention of the Saxophone. The genius behind its invention was a Belgian instrumentalist and instrument maker known as Adolphe Sax. I say "known as" because he was actually born as Antoine-Joseph Sax in 1819 in the town of Dinant (then in France but now in Belgium) into a family of instrument makers specialising in the horn. He was lucky to be alive, having faced many brushes with death. As a child, he once fell from a height

of three floors, hit his head on a stone and was believed dead. At the age of three, he drank a bowl full of acid, mistaking it for milk, and later swallowed a pin. He received serious burns from a gunpowder explosion and once fell onto a hot cast-iron frying pan, burning his side. Several times he avoided accidental poisoning and asphyxiation from sleeping in a room where varnished furniture was drying. Another time young Sax was struck on the head by a cobblestone and fell into a river, almost dying. Despite all that he grew up to study flute and clarinet at the Brussels conservatory.

Dissatisfied with the mechanisms of woodwind instruments, he made many experimental redesigns, especially improving the design of the bass clarinet. He then moved into brass instruments, intending to produce a family of instruments covering the whole useful frequency range instead of the present haphazard coverage. This resulted in what became known as the Saxhorn family, essentially valved bugles of all sizes from the very high to the profound. So impressed with the result was Hector Berlioz that he rearranged a piece to be played only on these instruments. This was 1844. (The modern day euphonium is a survivor of the saxhorn family.)

However, Sax's outstanding contribution to the instrumental world was what became known as the Saxophone. This was in essence a family of brass clarinets, sharing that instrument's mechanisms and bore but owning a unique and even sound from the very highest to the very lowest, from the extremely high (Sopranissimo) to the extremely low (Subcontrabass). This was highly successful but strangely did not find immediate favour even with

About the performers

Photo: Wikimedia Commons



Saxhorns and saxophones on display at the Brussels Museum of Musical Instruments.

those composers who were interested in instrumentation. For example neither Wagner, whose “Wagner Tubas” closely resemble saxhorns, nor Rimsky-Korsakov, possibly the most flamboyant orchestrator of the day, used the saxophone. French composers such as Ibert and Debussy wrote for the saxophone but neither included it as part of the orchestra. In Britain it fell to Vaughan Williams in his ballet *Job* (1930) and in his sixth (a tenor saxophone doubling bass clarinet) and especially his ninth (three saxophones and a flugelhorn, another Sax instrument) symphonies to feature it in the orchestral line-up. Walton did not use it in either of his symphonies though he had used it in *Façade*. On the other hand Britten, whose ear for orchestration must be unique for our times, used it regularly including in his *Sinfonia da Requiem* and the wonderful scene in the opera *Billy Budd* known as “Billy in the Darbies” where the consoling sound of the sax could not be matched by any other instrument. Many French composers have adopted it as well as Alban Berg in whose opera *Lulu* an alto saxophone is almost a character.

However it was in the musical underworld, the cabaret and (deep breath) the world of popular music and (gulp) jazz that the saxophones truly came into their own. While in the classical world few reliable players could be found, the popular world produced outstanding players such as Charlie Barnet, Sidney Bechet, John Coltrane, John Dankworth, Jimmy Dorsey, Coleman Hawkins, Gerry Mulligan, Charlie Parker, Sonny Rollins et al. Especially in the USA the musical world would not be the same without the saxophone. Think the opening of *West Side Story* or the *Pink Panther* theme.

Yet an early “scholarly” edition of Handel’s orchestral music suggested that; in the then notorious absence of players of the high trumpet, a useful substitute could be found in the soprano sax.

Finally let us not forget today’s favourite sax player, classical or less so, Jess Gillam of Radio 3 fame. Nonetheless the saxophone family has acquired an aura of decadence from which it will never quite rid itself.

Karen Libya



As one of the leading British saxophone quartets among the new generation of artists, the Ferio Saxophone Quartet consistently receives a highly enthusiastic reception from audiences and critics alike.

In 2015 Ferio made their debut at the Purcell Room, as winners of The Philharmonia/Martin Musical Ensemble Award and during the same year were winners of the Royal Over-Seas League’s Ensemble Competition. They received the Tunnell Trust Award in 2014/15 and were Park Lane Group Artists for the 2016 season. The ensemble was a St John’s Smith Square Young Artist 2016-2017; during the course of the year this scheme involved Ferio in a number of projects focusing on marketing, commissioning and outreach work in addition to a series of concerts.

The ensemble has performed at Queen Elizabeth Hall, Wigmore Hall, Conway Hall, Cambridge Summer Festival and the Three Choirs Festival, and has given concert tours in Scotland and the Channel Islands. They have also played at the Bermuda, Edinburgh Fringe, Brighton, Newbury, Machynlleth, North Norfolk and Petworth Festivals. In November 2017 the quartet travelled to New Zealand giving concerts organised by the Royal Over-Seas League where they also joined the panel of adjudicators for the Pettman/ROSL Arts Scholarship auditions.

Commissioning new music is also an important strand of Ferio’s work. As Park Lane Group Artists, they gave the world premiere of *Ludovico Technique* by Laura Bowler which they subsequently performed at Wigmore Hall. They have also worked closely with composer Guillermo Lago and

commissioned him to write a new work for the quartet. The resulting composition, inspired by three of William Wordsworth’s poems, received its premiere performance at St John’s Smith Square, London, in April 2017. In May 2017 they gave the first performance of *Close Shave* by Simon Rowland-Jones, which was commissioned by the St John’s Smith Square Young Artists’ Scheme.

More recent highlights include performances at Beaminster and Ryedale Festivals, a first visit to Festival Septembre Musical de l’Orne in Normandy, further collaborations with pianist Timothy End at Church Stretton Festival and Absolute Classics in Dumfries and Galloway, and taking masterclasses at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

In 2016, Ferio signed with Chandos Records and the following year released their debut commercial CD, *Flux*, a programme of original works for saxophone quartet which traces the saxophone’s history from the time of its invention to the present day. Their second album, *Revive*, is a set of Baroque transcriptions, including works by Bach, Handel, Purcell, Corelli and Byrd, which was launched in November 2018 at ‘Rhinegold Live’, hosted by Classical Music Magazine. The Quartet joined forces with pianist Timothy End for their third Chandos album, *Evoke*, released in October 2021, and including world premiere recordings of three brand new arrangements by Iain Farrington for saxophone quartet and piano: his own *Animal Parade*, Shostakovich’s *Jazz Suite* and Bizet’s *Carmen Suite*.

The quartet’s latest collaboration, with vocal ensemble the Corvus Consort, features

in their fourth Chandos album, *Revoiced*, released in July 2022. The collaboration features Baroque and Renaissance works in new transcriptions and arrangements for voices and saxophones, as well as works by living composers for the same forces. The combined ensemble has enjoyed performances at Winchfield and Chiltern Arts Festivals, the latter also including the premiere of a newly-commissioned arrangement of Vaughan Williams's cantata *In Windsor Forest* for choir and saxophone quartet. Ferio and Corvus look forward to upcoming engagements including Devon's brand new Whiddon Autumn Festival in September 2022.

With grateful thanks to the following members for their generous support:

Miranda Armitage
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Charles and Charlotte Monck
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and others who wish to remain anonymous or who have donated since this programme went to press.



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BBC Music Magazine,
Geoff Brown
(on the CD *Flux*)



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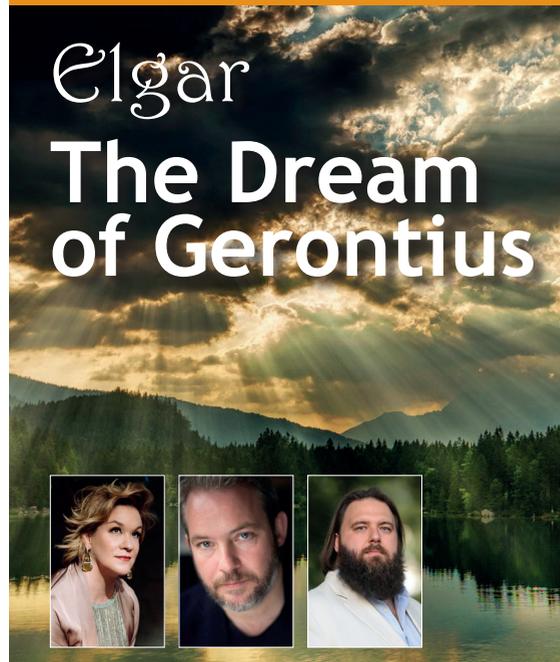
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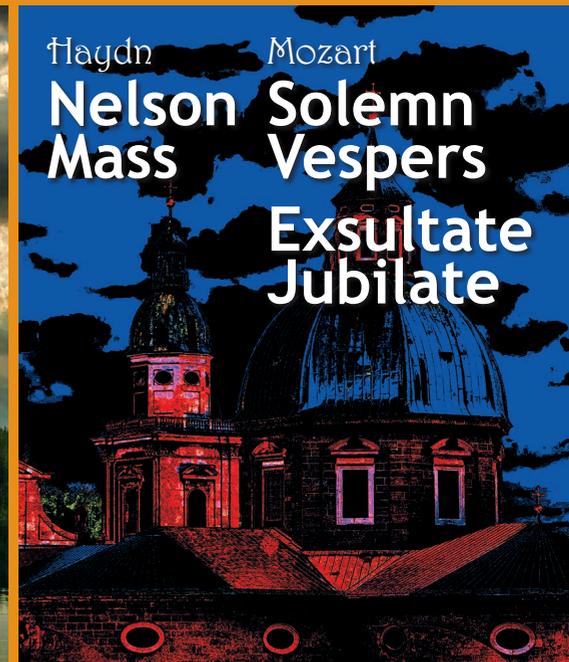
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Alice Coote - mezzo-soprano
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Leah Nicholson - Piano

9 January 2023

Scarlatti - Sonata in D minor, L.108
Beethoven - Sonata in E major, Op. 109
Janáček - Sonata 1.X.1905
Shostakovich - Sonata No. 2
Scriabin - Fantasie in B minor, Op. 28



Leah Nicholson

Piatti String Quartet with Michael Collins - Clarinet

13 February 2023

Smetana String Quartet No. 1
in E minor, 'From my life',
Mozart Clarinet Quintet and
Shostakovich String Quartet No. 10



Piatti Quartet



Michael Collins

Rachel Podger - The Virtuoso Violin

13 March 2023

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Celtic tunes and more



Rachel Podger
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