

SATURDAY 11 MARCH 7.30PM
ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, MACCLESFIELD

NORTHERN
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

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DIRECTED BY CHRISTOPHER JONES, VIOLIN
WITH KAY STEPHEN SOLO VIOLIN, CAROLINE TAYLOR
SOPRANO AND RALPH THOMAS WILLIAMS COUNTERTENOR



Originally from London, Ontario, **Christopher Jones** read music at McGill University in the class of Jonathan Crow, graduating with a BMus (Hons) first class in 2009. He was then offered a scholarship to complete his masters studies at the Royal Northern College of Music with Pavel Fischer and Leland Chen, graduating in 2011 with distinction. In addition to leading the Gildas Quartet, Christopher frequently directs the London Musical Arts Orchestra at St. Martin-in-the-Fields from the violin, with whom he has appeared as a soloist for various concertos and other works by Bach, Beethoven and Vivaldi. Other concerto appearances include performances of the Sibelius Concerto with the New Bristol Sinfonia, and of the Butterfly Lovers, Stravinsky, and Paganini Concertos with the Sheffield Philharmonic Orchestra. Christopher also enjoys working as an orchestral musician, playing with the Manchester Camerata, the Hallé, the Orchestra Symphonique de Montréal, Sinfonia Cymru, and guest leading the Skipton Camerata. Christopher teaches violin, chamber music, and conducts student orchestras at the Sheffield Music Academy, and has taught undergraduate chamber ensembles at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

Scottish violist and violinist **Kay Stephen** is passionate about ensemble playing in all of its forms, and loves the spontaneity and communication of making music with others. As a chamber musician, she has been a recipient of numerous awards including the Royal Overseas League Chamber Music Prize and the Audience Engagement Prize at the Franz Schubert and Modern Music Competition, Graz. She has been supported by the City Music Foundation, the Tunnell Trust and twice by the Park Lane Group, performing regularly at major UK venues including Manchester's Bridgewater Hall, the Wigmore Hall, the Cadogan Hall and frequently on BBC Radio 3. Concerto performances have included first viola in Brandenburg 6, under the baton of Nicholas Kremer, and Bosso's 'Within the Golden Hour', both with the Manchester Camerata; Telemann Viola Concerto at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and violin concertos by Brahms, Mozart and Joe Cutler. For nearly ten years, Kay was violist with the award winning Gildas Quartet, performing with them world wide throughout China, South Africa and Australia, among others and recording for Champs Hill. She has performed with ensembles such as the Consone, Elias, Navarra, and Edinburgh quartets, and the Manchester Collective, the Vonnegut Collective, Ensemble Deva and Red Note Ensemble. Formerly co-principal viola with the Manchester Camerata, she appeared many times as principal and as soloist with the orchestra. She has been invited as guest principal viola with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Camerata Alma Viva, as co-principal with the BBC Philharmonic, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia and the Britten Sinfonia.

Winner of the 2021 Emmy Destinn Young Singers Awards for Czech Opera and Song, **Caroline Taylor** studied as an Oglesby Scholar at the Royal Northern College of Music, generously supported by a Help Musicians UK Maidment Award. She is a recent Longborough Festival Opera Emerging Artist and member of the Wigmore Hall French Song Exchange. This season, Caroline makes her debut at the Wigmore Hall and joins Oxford Lieder as a 2022-2024 Young Artist with pianist George Ireland. She makes her company debut with Bampton Classical Opera as Tirsi in Handel's *Clori, Tirsi e Fileno* and performs the title role in Janáček's *Přítomnost lišky Bystroušky* (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) with Hampstead Garden Opera. An RNCM Gold Medal finalist, Caroline won the 2018 Joyce and Michael Kennedy Strauss Award, the 2018 Sir Anthony Lewis Memorial Prize and the 2019 Dean and Chadlington Singing Competition. She also received Third Prize at the 2019 Maureen Lehane Vocal Awards. Caroline and pianist George Ireland were finalists in the London Song Festival's British Art Song Competition, encompassing a masterclass with Dame Sarah Connolly. Most recently, Caroline was a semi-finalist in the Royal Overseas League Singers' Prize.

Ralph Thomas Williams is a British countertenor active in opera, concert and choral singing around the United Kingdom having finished his Masters degree with first class honours at The Royal Northern College of Music under the esteemed tutelage of Andrew Watts and Roger Hamilton and his undergraduate degree from Royal Holloway, University of London. Ralph has worked with eminent singers such as Iestyn Davies MBE, Tim Mead, Michael Chance CBE, James Bowman CBE, Sonia Prina, Emma Bell, Christopher Purves, Rodrick Williams OBE, Della Jones and Mary King MBE in both public and private masterclasses. His studies were generously supported by The James and Mary Glass Scholarship Award, The Jane Anthony Memorial Fund and The Maurice and Jean Buckley Award. Recent roles include Cupid in Blow's *Venus and Adonis* with HGO, premiering *The Host* in Amir Mayar Tafreshipour's *The Red Room* for Tete-a-tete festival, premiering *Isaac/Caspar* in Luke Styles/Britten's *Awakening Shadow* for both The Cheltenham and Presteigne Festivals, *Ruggiero* (Handel's *Alcina*) in Italy with SOA and *Refugee* in Jonathan Dove's *Flight* with Royal Northern College of Music. Ralph has performed scenes at college: *Angel 1/The Boy* in George Benjamin's *Written on Skin*, *Refugee in Flight* and *Fox* in Dove's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. He also performed *The Woodcutter's Boy* in Vaughan Williams' *The Pilgrim's Progress* at the RNCM. Other engagements have included the role of Prince Orlofsky (J. Strauss *Die Fledermaus*) with Leeds Youth Opera and the title role for Furness Bach Choir's performance of Handel's *Solomon* with conductor Marco Bellasi and The Michael Haydn Orchestra.

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George Frideric Handel (1685 – 1759)

Concerto Grosso Op.6 No.4,

I. Larghetto affetuoso II. Allegro III. Largo e piano IV. Allegro

Lera Auerbach (1973 –)

Sogno di Stabat Mater

Arcangelo Corelli (1653 – 1713)

Concerto Grosso Op.6 No.4

I. Adagio – Allegro II. Adagio III. Vivace IV. Allegro

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710 – 1736)

Stabat Mater

1. Stabat Mater dolorosa (Grave) – Duet 2. Cujus animam gementem (Andante amoroso) – Soprano aria 3. O quam tristis et afflicta (Larghetto) – Duet 4. Quae moerebat et dolebat (Allegro) – Alto aria 5. Quis est homo qui non fletet (Largo) – Duet 6. Vidit suum dulcem natum (A tempo giusto) – Soprano aria 7. Eja Mater, fons amois (Andantino) – Alto aria 8. Fac, ut ardeat cor meum (Allegro) – Duet 9. Sancta Mater, istud agas (A tempo giusto) – Duet 10. Fac, ut portem Christi moetem (Largo) – Alto aria 11. Inflammatus et accensus (Allegro) – Duet 12. Quando corpus morietur (Largo assai) – Duet

Handel was one of the Baroque era's leading musicians, whose best known works include Messiah, Music for the Royal Fireworks and Zadok the Priest. German by birth, he became a naturalised British citizen in 1727. With his opus 6 set of twelve concerti grossi, first published in London in 1740, Handel broadened the harmonic vocabulary and formal possibilities of this genre. A group of soloists, two violins and cello, is contrasted with the full orchestra. The opening movement is an expansive Larghetto affettuoso, filled with appoggiaturas which are both sensuous and lamenting. An exhilarating Allegro fugue follows, with every voice an equal participant in the conversation. The third movement Largo is a dreamy, major key saraband, where the upper voices drift serenely over a continuous walking bass line. The final Allegro returns to the minor and plays with edgy, repeated figures.

Intended for devotional private prayer, the 13th century poem 'Stabat mater dolorosa' is made up of 20 stanzas of three lines, and tells a story of deeply felt compassion for the Virgin Mary's suffering at her son Jesus Christ's crucifixion. It has proved a potent source of inspiration for many composers, from the medieval setting by Josquin Desprez, to Baroque composers such as Pergolesi and his near contemporaries Scarlatti and Vivaldi, through Haydn, Rossini and Dvořák and on to the present day, with settings by Arvo Pärt, James MacMillan and **Lera Auerbach**. Auerbach reworks Pergolesi's themes, filtering the older Baroque style through a contemporary lens to produce a modern concerto grosso for violin, viola, and vibraphone with string orchestra. She composed it in 2008 at the Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer's request, as an abbreviated version of her Dialogues with Stabat Mater composed three years earlier. Some sections of the piece more closely follow Pergolesi's score, while others explore new sonorities, harmonies and textures. Lera comments: "This work is an experiment. On one hand, the goal was to transcribe selected movements from Pergolesi's celebrated masterpiece into a concerto grosso [...] while remaining truthful to the spirit of the original work. On the other hand, I hoped to create a frame, a dialogue, an outlook from our own time on the same subject. The image of the grieving mother is universal just as pain is universal [...]. A dialogue can happen at different levels. Is it a dialogue between mother and child, a beginning and an end, musician and audience, soli and tutti, loneliness and understanding? Perhaps, after all, the difference is not that great between vocal and purely instrumental, sacred language and the vernacular, monologue and dialogue, reality and dream?"

Corelli was a gifted violinist whose modest output greatly influenced his contemporaries and successors, including the likes of Handel and J. S. Bach. His opus 6 set of twelve concerti grossi, first published posthumously in 1714 and circulated widely, established the concerto grosso as a leading genre for purely orchestral music in the Baroque era. The majestic opening leads to a joyous Allegro, abounding with light-and-shade interplay between the larger and smaller groups of players. This is contrasted by the lyrical slow movement Adagio. The last two fast movements have prevailing feeling of lightness: a graceful melody unfolds over a driving bass line in the Vivace, and the final Allegro rounds the work off with a spirited dance.

Pergolesi's creative life spanned just six years; he died at the tragically young age of 26, shortly after completing this moving meditation on the suffering of Mary standing at the foot of the cross. Scored for soprano and alto soloists with strings and continuo, the Stabat Mater is his most celebrated sacred work, becoming one of the most widely disseminated compositions of the 18th century.

Pergolesi sets the successive tercets of the poem with alternating duets and arias. From the start, he invokes a mournful affect; firstly the violins, and later the vocal duet, open with an achingly extended chain of suspensions. Later movements too use overtly sorrowful musical devices, such as strong dissonant clashes for 'O quam tristis et afflicta' in the second duet, and a chromatic descending bass line which underscores the third duet 'Quis est homo'. Throughout, Pergolesi speaks a simple, natural language, informed by his operatic style, skilfully constructing profoundly moving music with slender resources.

TONIGHT'S ORCHESTRA

Violin 1

Christopher Jones
Sarah Whittingham
Paula Smart
Sarah Percy

Cello

Jennifer Langridge
Barbara Grunthal

Double bass

James Manson

Violin 2

Simon Gilks
Rebecca Thompson
Henry Rankin (not Auerbach)

Harpischord

Neil Taylor

Viola

Kay Stephen
Michael Dale
Henry Rankin (Auerbach only)

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