

## **Quatuor Diotima**

*with Christopher Redgate (oboe)*

**King's College Chapel, University of Aberdeen**

Thursday 24th October 2019, 6.00pm

### **Programme**

Brian Ferneyhough *Schatten aus Wasser und Stein*

Rebecca Saunders *Unbreathed*

Clara Iannotta *Dead wasps in the jam-jar (iii)*

**sound**conversation with Christopher Redgate after the performance

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### **Programme notes**

#### **Brian Ferneyhough *Schatten aus Wasser und Stein***

*Schatten aus Wasser und Stein* was composed in response to a request from Christopher Redgate for a chamber work utilizing his newly-developed quarter-tone oboe. It follows on from my *Finis Terrae* of 2012 in its concern with the sometimes alienating and perplexing otherness of natural phenomena. The imagined shadows of the title are to be understood as sharing the immaterial, uncertainly mediated nature of penumbral phenomena, the while manifesting transient defining qualities of successions of fluid or immobile states. In this sense, perhaps, music is unequalled as *ars umbrarum*. The opening section, where gnarled and tangled lines in the oboe are partially reflected in the uncertain light of pitch extensions in the two violins and viola, might be seen to set the stage for this pervasive image.

Although a work for oboe quintet, I contrived to break the quartet down into various duos and trios interspersed with brief flashes of violent quartet figurations. Having many years ago composed my 4th Quartet with soprano voice, I did not want, on this occasion, for the piece to be mistaken for a string quartet with adjunct oboe, particularly since a number of genres and formal conventions are alluded to *en passant*.

*Schatten aus Wasser und Stein* is warmly dedicated to Christopher Redgate, without whose encouragement and expertise this work could never have been written.

## **Rebecca Saunders *Unbreathed***

*Inside, withheld, unbreathed,  
Nether, undisclosed.*

*Souffle, vapour, ghost,  
hauch and dust.*

*Absent, silent, void,  
Naught beside.*

*Either, neither, sole,  
Unified.*

"The skull is enveloped in a profound silence that seems nothingness itself. The silence does not reside on the surface, but is held like smoke within. It is unfathomable, eternal, a disembodied vision cast upon a point in the void."

*Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, Haruki Murakami

"...I'll never know, which is perhaps merely the inside of my distant skull where once I wandered..."

*The Unnamable*, Samuel Beckett

"...one day to be here, where there are no days, which is no place, born of the impossible voice the unmakeable, and a gleam of light, still all would be silent and empty and dark, and dark, as now, as soon now, when all will be ended, all said, it says, it murmurs."

*XIII, Texts For Nothing*, Samuel Beckett

"This corporal revenge. A genuine, concerted and systematic undoing of grace. Every promise discovered too late to be a fucking lie told badly. The promise of intimacy and the promise of beauty ripped away to reveal a gawping, hyperreal brute..."

*US DEAD TOLD LOVE, A primer for Cavaders*, Ed Atkins

For Diotima. First performance at the Wigmore Hall on 18th January 2018. Commissioned by: Wigmore Hall with the support of André Hoffmann, president of the Fondation Hoffmann, a Swiss grant-making foundation; the Dina Koston and Roger Shapiro Fund in the Washington Library of Congress; ECLAT Festival Stuttgart; Festival Musica Strasbourg; Philharmonie Luxembourg; Klangspuren Schwaz; November Music

## **Clara Iannotta *Dead wasps in the jam-jar (iii)***

*dead wasps in the jam-jar* – like so many of Clara Iannotta's pieces, its title a striking image taken from the poetry of Dorothy Molloy – began as short piece for the violinist Yuki Numata Resnick. It was one of four new works commissioned to nestle amongst the movements of J. S. Bach's Partita no. 1 for solo violin, and in this case Iannotta drew inspiration from the Double

to Bach's Corrente, draping a range of glissandi and other noise effects over a skeleton of the original. The idea has since expanded into a series of three separate works: *dead wasps in the jam-jar (ii)* for string orchestra and electronics, and *(iii)* for string quartet and electronics.

Iannotta writes that while working on these pieces, she 'pictured a kind of deep-sea environment, the lowest layer in the ocean, where constant pressure and perpetual movement seem to shape the stillness of time'. *dead wasps in the jam-jar (iii)* certainly moves through its gestures with the slow, intense consideration of a creature swimming in complete darkness: the original violin solo is stretched to oceanic dimensions, revealing, in its spaces, endless new forms that could not have been seen before. Like the other two pieces in this short series, it is an investigation of surface and what lies beneath it; here the depths are revealed to be more profound than could have been imagined.

*dead wasps in the jam-jar (iii)* was written for and first performed by the Arditti Quartet in 2017. A completely revised version was first performed by Quatuor Diotima in 2018.

## Biographies

**Christopher Redgate** studied at Chethams' School of Music and the Royal Academy of Music. He is the inventor of the Howarth-Redgate system oboe and was the Evelyn Barbirolli Research Fellow at the Royal Academy of Music from 2012 to 2019. He works as a soloist, chamber and orchestral musician and has performed across the world with ensembles such as Quatuor Diotima, The Arditti Quartet, Ensemble Modern, Kreutzer Quartet, London Sinfonietta, The Coull Quartet, London Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Many composers have written works for him and he has an extensive list of recordings on the Divine Art/Metier, NMC and Oboe Classics labels. He also writes extensively about the oboe in professional journals and has contributed a number of chapters for multi-authored books. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music (FRAM) in 2015. He is an avid improviser who also composes and plays the piano.

## Quatuor Diotima

Yun-Peng Zhao, violin, Constance Ronzatti, violin, Franck Chevalier, viola, Pierre Morlet, cello. *Please note that Constance Ronzatti will be replaced by Léo Marillier for this concert.*

Formed in 1996 by graduates of the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, Quatuor Diotima is one of the most in-demand chamber ensembles in the world today. As well as appearing regularly in the world's finest halls and concert series, the quartet has worked in close collaboration with several of the greatest composers of the late twentieth century, notably Pierre Boulez and Helmut Lachenmann. The quartet regularly

commissions new works from the most brilliant composers of our time, including Toshio Hosokawa, Miroslav Srnka, Alberto Posadas, Mauro Lanza, Gérard Pesson, Rebecca Saunders and Tristan Murail.

As well as performing and recording, the quartet are also involved in educational work, including hosting and teaching masterclasses bringing together young composers and quartets from around the world at l'Abbaye de Noirlac. The Quatuor Diotima records exclusively for the Naïve label: in 2016 they launched their Diotima Collection for that label, devoted to the works of major composers of our time.

They are currently in residence as invited artists at Radio France in Paris.

This concert is supported by the University of Aberdeen  
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