



**Ben Goldscheider - horn**  
**Huw Watkins - piano**

Friday 23rd October 2020, 2000

**Programme**

Jörg Widmann	<i>Air (2005)</i>
Volker David Kirchner	<i>Tre Poemi (1986-87)</i>
Huw Watkins	<i>Lament</i>
Roxanna Panufnik	<i>Sonnets Without Words (Date)</i>
Richard Bissill	<i>Song of a New World (Date)</i>

## Programme notes

### Jörg Widmann *Air*

Jörg Widmann's "Air" for solo Horn was written in 2005 for German Horn Player Bruno Schneider. The composer writes in the foreword that "the work is as a whole, orientated towards a single vocal gesture- "air" in both its literal meaning and as the established musical term...Through this microtonal cosmos, and the constant fluctuations between open and stopped notes, a natural work on the themes of proximity and distance is created." The piece opens with extremely soft long tones, with both open and closed timbres (a technique involving the closing off of the bell with the player's right hand). Then, a series of legato phrases on the harmonic series of Eb are played, whilst the sound continues reverberating inside the lid of the grand piano whose sustained pedal is kept down for the duration of the piece by a pair of scissors. Of particular interest is the use of the 7th harmonic, which naturally lies very flat and its natural rawness is intensified by the sound waves clashing together as they hit the piano strings; a close shimmering of tone we so often associate with "playing out of tune". The piece continues to explore the tonal versatility of the harmonic series, exploring the extreme high and low registers and extremes of dynamics. The "Marcato" section introduces a more psychotic flurry of very fast glissandi and technical virtuosity that hugely exploits the possibilities of the horn, leading to a section of respite that is quickly interrupted by the juxtaposition of extremely loud open and stopped sounds. Here, not only does the tone sustain inside the piano, but the piano strings actually seem to absorb the difference between the open and metallic sounds at the same time; a wonderful visceral effect. The piece then finishes with the player singing and playing an open octave in pianissimo, a fitting ending to a piece that takes the listener on a wild journey of the Horn and its capabilities.

### Volker David Kirchner *Tre Poemi*

Kirchner, a German violist and composer, does a musical balancing act with his *Tre Poemi* for horn and piano: the piece pays homage to Romantic character pieces while maintaining a very modern approach to horn tone colours and technique. Composed from 1986 to 1989, *Tre Poemi* is actually derived from a song cycle for horn, piano and baritone, which is a setting of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Sonnette an Orpheus*. The first movement has often stood alone as a single complete piece. *Tre Poemi*, as it exists today, was written for the German horn soloist Marie-Luise Neunecker. The *Lamento* was premiered at New York's Town Hall on the March 24, 1987 and the *Danza* was premiered in Karlsruhe on May 6, 1988.

The interaction of the horn and piano are intimately important to the texture of the piece. For instance, in the first movement, *Lamento*, the horn plays directly into the body of the grand piano, changing the resonance of both instruments and allowing the overtones of the piano strings to float out as if from nowhere. Further contemporary techniques are explored to further the relationship between horn and piano; pizzicato of the piano strings in imitation with hand-stopped horn playing and glissandos from inside the piano, further enhancing the prominence of the overtones. The composer also plays with echo effects, notably in the second movement, *Danza*, which escalates in carefully considered stages and is not always the wildly rearing beast it seems to be. The final movement, *La gondola funebre*, is achingly slow and uses a wide tonal range in both piano and horn.

### **Huw Watkins *Lament***

When Ben Goldscheider asked me to write a new piece for a CD celebrating the legacy of Dennis Brain, I immediately thought of Poulenc's *Elégie* (written in memory of Brain) and its juxtaposition of violent anger and lyrical beauty, and felt I wanted to do something similar. *Lament* begins quietly, with long, expressive horn lines emerging from a web of piano harmony. At its climax, the horn writing becomes anguished, accompanied by increasingly dissonant piano chords, before a muted return to the opening music, the harmony less consoling now.

Huw Watkins, 2020

### **Roxanna Panufnik *Sonnets Without Words***

When horn player Ben Goldscheider asked me if I had anything he could programme for a CD, I saw an opportunity to do what I'd longed to, for some years.

I have set many Shakespeare sonnets for voice and piano but have always felt that the long, languorous vocal lines could work well as purely instrumental - especially with Ben's beautiful and lyrical timbre.

**1. Mine Eye** (1999), for mezzo-soprano and piano, was written as a Valentine's gift for JS, the boyfriend of that time. JS was/is a great lover of visual art and this sonnet's words conjure up a painterly portrayal of love – how the artist sees the emotion but still may not be able to fathom what is felt behind a beautiful face.

**2. Music to hear** was commissioned for baritone *Oliver Dunn* and pianist *Emma Abbate*, by *Peninsula Arts* (Plymouth University), celebrating

Shakespeare's 450<sup>th</sup> birthday. Its sentiments are bittersweet like my harmonic language. The poem is about a young man saddened by the cheerful beauty of music, because harmony and concord remind him of his obligation to marry and procreate.

**3. Sweet Love Remember'd** was a private commission - from Dora Black to her husband Jack, on the occasion of their 50th Wedding anniversary. Originally written for Alto voice, the accompaniment can be performed on harpsichord or piano. The words seem full of grief and desolation at the start but they end with a positive statement that tells us however low we have become, the memory of Sweet Love

".....such wealth brings

That then I scorn to change my state with kings."

Roxanna Panufnik, 2020

### **Richard Bissill *Songs of a New World***

Richard Bissill's "Song of a New World" was written for fellow horn player Sarah Willis. Sarah, a member of the Berlin Philharmonic horn section since 2001, is one of the leading pioneers of the horn on an international stage through her own playing and involvement with the online community. The piece was commissioned especially for one of her solo albums, "Horn Discoveries" with the intention of highlighting the wonderful low register of the horn, something which Willis is considered nothing less than a world expert.

As such, the piece has many sections in which the extremes of the low register are explored and are quite clearly written to exploit the talents of a musician of Willis's skill.

The beginning is a free, jazzy cadenza for solo horn that introduces the main, lilting theme of the work. When the piano enters at the end of the cadenza, the composer gives the performer the instruction of playing "out of tempo, sounding improvised" and this is a theme that runs throughout the entire work. Bissill achieves the preciseness of a classical score through the lens of jazz-tinted glasses.

## Biographies

### Ben Goldscheider

Over the last year Ben has made his debut with the Mozarteum Orchestra in the Mozartwoche Festival (Salzburg) and with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

This season Ben records as a soloist with the Philharmonia Orchestra, and with pianist/composer Huw Watkin. He returns to Wigmore Hall, performs Britten's Serenade at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Ligeti's Horn Trio at the Pierre Boulez Saal.

At the age of 18 Ben was a Concerto Finalist in the 2016 BBC Young Musician Competition. Highlights since then include his debut at the BBC Proms, solo appearances with the Aurora, Britten Sinfonia, English Chamber, London Mozart Players, Lucerne Symphony, Manchester Camerata, Prague Philharmonia and Sinfonie Orchester Berlin.

A committed chamber musician, Ben has collaborated with Daniel Barenboim, Martha Argerich, Sergei Babayan, Elena Bashkirova, Sunwook Kim and Michael Volle at the Verbier, Salzburg, Jerusalem, Intonations (Berlin) and Barenboim (Buenos Aires) Festivals, among many others.

In 2018 Ben's debut album was released and he was selected as a BBC Music Magazine Rising Star and Gramophone Magazine "One to Watch". He was a prize winner at the 2019 YCAT International Auditions.

**Ben Goldscheider is YCAT's inaugural Ann Driver Trust Artist.**

...the horn soloist, Benjamin Goldscheider, was superb.

**The Times / Halle Orchestra - Sir Mark Elder - Siegfried / 2019**

### Huw Watkins

A pianist and one of Britain's foremost composers, Huw Watkins was born in Wales in 1976. He studied piano with Peter Lawson at Chetham's School of Music and composition with Robin Holloway, Alexander Goehr and Julian Anderson at Cambridge and the Royal College of Music. In 2001 he was awarded the Constant and Kit Lambert Junior Fellowship at the Royal College of Music, he now teaches composition at the Royal Academy of Music.

His own compositions have been commissioned and performed by the Nash Ensemble, Belcea and Elias quartets, BBC Symphony Orchestra, LSO, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra,

amongst others.

As a pianist, Huw Watkins is in great demand with orchestras and festivals including the London Sinfonietta, Britten Sinfonia, the BBC orchestras and Aldeburgh, East Neuk and Cheltenham Festivals. He has performed globally at concert halls including at Wigmore Hall, the Barbican, the Library of Congress in Washington, the Lincoln Center, the Smithsonian Institute in NY, Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival in Detroit, Kristiansand Orchestra in Norway, Columbus (USA) with ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, Domaine Forget and Toronto Summer Music Festival and in Italy, France, Germany, Hungary and Portugal.

Strongly committed to the performance of new music, Huw has had a few piano concertos written for him by Philip Cashian, Helen Grime and Tansy Davies.

He won the Chamber Music of Lincoln Center's 2016 Elise L. Stoecker Prize in recognition of his significant contributions to the field of chamber music composition. He was composer in the house with the Orchestra of the Swan and Composer in Association with BBC NOW

He performs regularly with his brother Paul Watkins, as well as Tamsin Waley-Cohen and has featured as both Composer in Residence and pianist at festivals including West Cork Chamber Music, Presteigne and Lars Vogt's 'Spannungen' Festival in Heimbach, Germany.

Huw Watkins is regularly featured on BBC Radio 3, and has recorded for labels such as Signum, Chandos, Nimbus, BIS and NMC.

## Forthcoming events

**Any Enemy | Sat 24 October | 1200**

Performance including the premiere of two movements from John de Simone's *Ups and Downs*

**The Big Picture | Sat 24 October | 1400**

Film of last year's performance of Judith Weir's work which celebrated the re-opening of Aberdeen Art Gallery

**Guild of Horn Players | Sat 24 October | 1600**

Works by Tim Jackson, Thomas Hewitt Jones and Tippett

**Ten Wee Drams | Sat 24 October | 2000**

Ten specially commissioned pieces for bass and contrabass clarinet played by Sarah Watts

**Gaia | Sun 25 October | 1200**

New music for flute and voice by Laura Bowler and Ruth Morley

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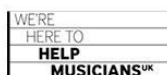
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