



Family-friendly Promenade Concert

Ruth Wall	harp
Richard Watkins	horn
Richard Ingham	saxophones, bass clarinet, wind-synth

Saturday 30 January 2021, 1000

Programme

Arranged by Graham Fitkin	Yalda
Messiaen	<i>Appel Interstellaire</i> from
	<i>Des Canyons aux Etoiles (VI)</i>
Peter Maxwell Davies	<i>Sea Eagle</i>
Richard Ingham	<i>Winter Reflections in Sound</i>
Arranged by Graham Fitkin	<i>Carol of the Bells</i>

Programme notes

Yalda arranged by Graham Fitkin

Yaldā Night is an Iranian winter solstice festival celebrated on the longest and darkest night of the year. According to the calendar, this corresponds to the night of December 20th/21st. The longest and darkest night of the year is a time when friends and family gather together to eat, drink and read poetry (especially the poetry of Hafez) until well after midnight. Fruits and nuts are eaten and pomegranates and watermelons are particularly significant. The red colour in these fruits symbolises the crimson hues of dawn and glow of life.

Activities common to the festival include staying up past midnight, conversation, drinking, reading poems out loud, telling stories and jokes, and for some dancing. Prior to invention and prevalence of electricity, decorating and lighting the house and yard with candles was also part of the tradition, but few have continued this tradition. Another tradition is giving dried fruits and nuts to family and friends. Prior to a ban of alcohol, drinking wine was also part of the celebration.

Ruth plays this piece on the Bray Harp - Paintings from the 15th and 16th centuries frequently show musician angels playing 'Gothic' harps alongside other instruments of the day. These harps had bray pins and were heard all over Europe during the Renaissance, being used for accompanying court songs and sacred music, and for playing dance music. Instead of using ordinary string pegs, 'Gothic' harps were fitted with little bent wooden pegs, which held the gut strings in place and lightly touched them causing a silvery buzzing effect (or even the sound of a braying donkey!). Although sounding quite raucous to modern ears, this buzzing was familiar throughout Europe for several hundred years.

Ruth Wall

***Appel Interstellaire* from *Des Canyons aux Etoiles (VI)* by Messiaen**

Messiaen's *Appel Interstellaire* is the sixth movement in his orchestral masterpiece *Des Canyons aux Etoiles*. The piece was commissioned to celebrate the bicentenary of the United States Declaration of Independence. While preparing the piece Messiaen was inspired by the colourful Bryce Canyon in Utah. The movements pay homage to the birdsong and natural landscape.

In this movement one can imagine looking up in the desert night to the stars. Musically it is a kaleidoscope of special effects to any composer, yet Messiaen incorporates these and adds dramatic silences to create a spellbinding piece.

Richard Watkins

***Sea Eagle* by Peter Maxwell Davies**

Peter Maxwell Davies wrote *Sea Eagle* for myself in 1983 as a result of our collaboration in his own ensemble The Fires of London. I joined the group in 1981 and was involved in many performances of his chamber operas *The Martyrdom of St Magnus* and *The Lighthouse*, both of which had a challenging role for the Horn. Max initially wrote a Study for Solo Horn but after a certain amount of persuasion wrote two more movements, it was whilst writing the second at his home in Orkney that he encountered a Sea Eagle outside his front door. This in itself was something of a surprise as the Sea Eagles were, at the time, an endangered species. There was a breeding programme on the Isle of Mull but this was many miles away, off the West coast of Scotland.

The piece explores the differing characteristics of the Sea Eagle from its majestic flight to a more aggressive, hunting nature.

We end as we began with Britten's Epilogue from the Serenade this time played from a distance away, off stage.

Richard Watkins

***Winter Reflections in Sound* by Richard Ingham**

Winter Reflections in Sound is a suite of six improvised pieces inspired by photographs of Scotland in the depths of winter in January 2021. I'm very grateful to photographers Josie Fairley-Keast, Ben Armstrong, Wiktorija Chojnacka and Helen McCulloch. The movements are played on five different instruments, all single reed instruments, and utilise a range of playing techniques.

1 A Song by the Dee in January

Played on the baritone saxophone - this is the lowest of the standard quartet of instruments and usually plays a bass line. The melody wanders and flows a little like the majestic River Dee in Aberdeenshire. It uses the phrygian mode or scale, which has quite a haunting sound and begins on a semitone. Palestrina and Buxtehude used the phrygian mode in their compositions and it's commonly used in jazz and pop.

2 Running in the Snow

This uses the soprano saxophone and follows a scampering dog through the snow, playing a kind of sustained and insistent double tonguing effect. With a few multiphonics (where the player uses a special fingering to play more than one note at once). An innocent melody in the dorian mode appears at the end. The dorian mode is used in much traditional folk music. As winter was closing in I had to put a waistcoat on.

3 Ice Landscape and Sunrise at Easter Balmoral

You can see the sun rising through the icy trees as the alto saxophone begins a fluttering sound, achieved by just blowing air through the instrument, then rapid tonguing but not playing any real notes, and then by continuous trills as the player activates the reed and starts to make a more resonant sound. The percussion rattle heard at the beginning is from Kamchatka, in the far north east of Russia, near to where ancient peoples used to walk between what we now call Russia and the USA. It's made of reindeer antler and beaten metal. Now we need a scarf.

4 Snowy Morning on an Aberdeen Street

For this early morning in Aberdeen, the bass clarinet plays a deep atonal melody. Atonal means not in any key at all. The bass clarinet sounds very different to the saxophones, even the baritone saxophone, because the tube is cylindrical, rather than the conical tube of the saxophone. If you look at the top of the instrument it's just the same width all the way down - the big metal bell is just decorative. But if you look at the baritone saxophone again (or any of them), you'll notice that the instrument is narrow at the top and then gradually widens. The reindeer antler rattle from the previous piece can be seen on the music stand. Time for a hat now.

5 Moonrise with Snow, Moniaive

We hear the wind synthesiser in this piece. This instrument was first produced in 1987 and can be thought of as like a keyboard synthesiser, but wind-driven. Breath control and fingering are very similar to the saxophone, and it has a range of seven octaves (the normal saxophone range is just two and a half octaves). There are many different sounds you can use, and here I'm using a pretty piccolo sound with delay (this repeats each note a couple of times, getting quieter each time). I like this sound because the range of the instrument allows me to go many octaves below where the piccolo normally lives, so it sounds like a breathy contrabass flute. I used a loop pedal to create the accompanying soundscape, also generated from the wind synthesiser. The loop pedal is a device you can record onto several times. My piccolo melody is a simple tune in a major key. Right at the front of the screen you can see a small Arctic soapstone carving of a great northern diver (or common loon). It's my favourite soapstone carving and was given to me

by my Canadian cousin Bill, who lived and worked in the far north for many years. Moniaive is in Dumfries and Galloway. I needed a pullover!

6 Winter Dance at Lochnagar

The final movement is from the mountains, hence the coat. We return to the alto saxophone, and I changed from my classical to my jazz mouthpiece. It's a funky piece, and uses mostly a blues scale. And some false fingerings, where you play the same note using different fingerings for a subtle timbral effect. One of the most famous uses of this technique is in Bach's Suite no 1 for solo 'cello, in the first movement. He was a clever guy, he had his own way of being funky. We also hear slap tongueing, where the tongue becomes much more percussive than usual. Lochnagar is a mountain just south of Braemar. The sky and snow turned blue in the winter afternoon, just before sunset. The walkers made it home, ok, though.

Richard Ingham

Carol Of The Bells arranged by Graham Fitkin

"Carol of the Bells" is a popular Christmas Carol based on the Ukrainian folk chants. In 1914 The Ukrainian composer Mykola Leontovych was commissioned to create the song resulting in new work for choir was called "Shchedryk".

The original folk story related in the song was associated with the coming New Year, which, in pre-Christian Ukraine, was celebrated with the coming of spring in April. The original Ukrainian title translates to "the generous one" or is perhaps derived from the Ukrainian word for bountiful (shchedryj), and tells a tale of a swallow flying into a household to proclaim the bountiful year that the family will have. With the introduction of Christianity to Ukraine and the adoption of the Julian calendar, the celebration of the New Year was moved from April to January 13th.

Cornish composer Graham Fitkin made this arrangement for Ruth's Gaelic wire stung harp (also known as a clarsach). The harp's brass and silver strings produce a very long sustain when played with the fingernails, resulting in a bell like sound.

Wire strung harp - The original clarsachs of the Gaels were strung with wire. Played across the Highlands of Scotland and in Ireland from the 10th century, these harps have a very pronounced sustain. Evidence collected by Edward Bunting in the late 18th-early 19th centuries shows that these harps were played with fingernails and used a complex damping technique to control the long sustain of the resonating strings. These ancient harps were constructed with sound-boxes hollowed-out from single blocks of timber, and strung with brass.

Ruth Wall

Biographies

Ruth Wall

Scottish harpist Ruth Wall performs on concert and lever harps, buzzing Renaissance bray harp and Gaelic wire strung harp. She is passionate about new music and performs with groups such as BBC Concert Orchestra, Goldfrapp, Kathryn Tickell, Sacconi Quartet and London Chamber Orchestra. Ruth has performed at venues including Berlin Philharmonic, Eden Project, Sydney Opera House, Spiral Hall Tokyo, Tate Gallery and Glastonbury.

She has worked with composers such as Peter Maxwell Davies, Howard Skempton, Gavin Bryars, and Laurence Crane, building up a repertoire of new works for the harp, leading to her first solo album 'The Uncommon Harp'. Ruth also collaborates with her partner, composer Graham Fitkin as FitkinWall. Their first album 'Kaplan' is based on the fictitious character in Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* and toured Japan and UK. In 2007 'Still Warm' juxtaposed Ruth's early harps with new electronics and live visuals, and in 2015 they released and toured their latest album 'Lost'. Working with Graham's 9-piece band Fitkin, she appeared on stage at the Royal Opera House, for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and on the 2016 albums 'Vamp' and 'Veneer'.

Recently Ruth has worked with Will Gregory and Portishead's Adrian Utley in a new soundtrack to accompany Carl Dreyer's classic 1928 film 'Joan of Arc'. She is also a member of the Will Gregory Moog Ensemble. She recorded and toured with Goldfrapp on 'Seventh Tree' and has recorded with artists including French singer Nolwenn Leroy, saxophonist Simon Haram, bassist Charlie Jones, and trumpeter Noel Langley.

Since 2000 Ruth has performed in galleries, alongside work by artists including Brian Wynter and James Hugonin as well as collaborating with Alessandra Ausenda on a sound installation involving a giant rotating dress. She toured extensively in 2013 with the acclaimed aerial theatre company Ockham's Razor and joined Kneehigh Theatre in 2017 in their production of 'The Tin Drum'.

Radio and TV appearances include BBC Radio 3 Late Junction Sessions and In Tune, Radio 4 and Jools Holland. She features in 'Loving Vincent', and on Ben Wheatley's 'Sightseers' and John Lunn's soundtrack for the BBC series 'The White Queen'. Ruth has recorded for EMI, Mercury Music, Sony BMG, GFR, Bedroom Community and Universal.

Richard Watkins

Richard Watkins is one of the most sought-after horn players of his generation. He was Principal Horn of the Philharmonia Orchestra for twelve years, and is currently a member of the Nash Ensemble and a founder member of London Winds.

Richard Watkins has appeared at many of the world's most prestigious venues in the UK, Europe and the USA, and has worked with conductors such as Giulini, Sawallisch, Salonen, Slatkin, Sinopoli, Rozhdestvensky, Petrenko, Andrew Davis and Mark Elder.

His extensive discography includes recordings of the Horn Concertos by Mozart, Malcolm Arnold, Glière, Ethel Smyth and Colin Matthews, as well as Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante and Chamber Music for Horn by Schumann, Schubert and Poulenc. Recent releases include 'The Romantic Horn' with pianist, Julius Drake for Signum, a Wigmore Live Disc of the Britten Canticles with Mark Padmore, Alexander Goehr's Horn Trio for NMC, Edward Gregson's Horn Concerto with the BBC Philharmonic for Chandos and 'Sea-Eagle' for NMC featuring works by British composers composed for Richard Watkins.

Richard Watkins has a long association with Aldeburgh Music, first performing Britten's Serenade with Sir Peter Pears in 1983. Since then he has appeared regularly as soloist and recitalist, performing Concertos by Colin Matthews and Oliver Knussen as well as performances of Britten's works for solo horn, the Serenade and Canticles. He has been actively involved with the Britten-Pears School, coaching and giving masterclasses. He has also recorded Britten's Serenade with Allan Clayton and Aldeburgh Strings and recently directed the inaugural Britten-Pears Brass Week.

In recital, Richard Watkins regularly performs with singers such as Allan Clayton, John Mark Ainsley, Ian Bostridge and Mark Padmore, and with pianists Barry Douglas, Julius Drake, Paul Lewis, Roger Vignoles and Ian Brown.

Closely associated with promoting contemporary music for the horn, Richard Watkins has given premières of concertos by Mark-Anthony Turnage, Maxwell-Davies, Osborne, Lindberg, Muldowney, Lefanu, Tansy Davies, Colin and David Matthews. Recent premières have included Colin Matthews' Horn Concerto and Trio, horn quintets by James MacMillan, David Matthews and Mark-Anthony Turnage and Horn Trios by Huw Watkins, Alexander Goehr and Gerald Barry. Richard Watkins holds the Dennis Brain Chair of Horn Playing at the Royal Academy of Music where he is also a Fellow.

Richard Ingham

Richard Ingham has had an extensive career as a performer, composer and educator. He has given solo saxophone recitals and chamber concerts throughout the UK, and in the USA, Canada, China, Japan, Thailand, India, Poland, Italy, Spain, Finland, France, Ireland, Slovenia and Latvia. Numerous works have been written for him, and performances have included UK premieres of works by Sally Beamish, Mary Ann Kennedy, Pete Stollery, Martin Kershaw, Fraser Burke, James Ross, Tom David Wilson, François Rossé, Denis Smalley, Ryo Noda and Christian Lauba. He is a currently a member of Strangeness & Charm, Trio Verso and the Auricle Ensemble.

He has played by invitation at every World Saxophone Congress since 1985 (in Washington DC, Tokyo, Pesaro, Valencia, Montreal, Minneapolis, Ljubljana, Bangkok, St Andrews, Strasbourg), and in 2012 was the Director of the acclaimed XVI World Saxophone Congress in St Andrews, Scotland. He has worked with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra, Opera North and at the Royal National Theatre. Richard has played concerti by Pierre Max Dubois, Dave Heath, Sally Beamish, John Williams, Mozart and Berio.

He was the first UK performer on the WX7 (wind synthesiser), and has performed live and in recordings. He played WX7 at the Royal National Theatre in productions of *Angels in America* and *Under Milkwood*, and at Sheffield Crucible in *Whale* (music by Terry Davies), and, with Red Note Ensemble, Philip Glass's *1,000 Airplanes on the Roof*.

He is the editor of the *Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), and is President of the Clarinet and Saxophone Society of Great Britain.

Forthcoming events

Gold.Berg.Werks | Sat 30 January | 1200

Karlheinz Essl's unusual take of Bach's *The Goldberg Variations* performed by Xenia Pestova Bennett (piano) and Ed Bennett (electronics)

Aberdeen | Sat 30 January | 1500

New collaboration between David Fennessy, Sonia Cromarty and Tim Cooper

Any Enemy & Brandon University New Music Ensemble | Sat 30 January | 1700

Unique live digital performance including new works specially commissioned for joint performance by the two ensembles

Richard Watkins, horn + Composer Conversation | Sat 30 January | 2000

Philip Cashian's *Scenes from the Life of Viscount Medardo* and discussion with Philip Cashian, Aileen Sweeney and Rylan Gleave

social sound | Sat 30 January | 2130

Join us online for a chat about the day's events in the company of featured artists

Listen Carefully | Sun 31 January | 1000

Siobhan Dyson's audio-visual work depicts a day in the life of an autistic person

Hebrides Ensemble *Diversions* | Sun 31 January | 1300

Works by Joe Stollery, Ben Teague, Rylan Gleave, Siobhan Dyson, Ben Lunn, Jason Hodgson and Lucy Hale

Available throughout the festival:

[Digital French Horn Exhibition](#)

Most of the performances will be available on our YouTube channel until 28th February. Please see our website for more information.

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