

LSO St Luke's

CHAMBER MUSIC

BBC
RADIO



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Friday 8 October 2021 1pm
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

Tristan Murail: C'est un jardin secret...
Tansy Davies: Dark Ground
Elliott Carter: Figments IV & V
Bethan Morgan-Williams:
Dog in the Moon (world premiere)
Luciano Berio: Naturale for viola,
percussion and tape

Antoine Tamestit viola
Colin Currie percussion

C'est un jardin secret...

Tristan Murail

Tristan Murail studied composition with Olivier Messiaen at the Paris Conservatoire and taught computer music and composition at IRCAM, the Institute for Research and Coordination in Acoustics/Music. His music employs the so-called 'spectral' technique, basing its harmony on the fundamental properties of sound. The title of C'est un jardin secret, written in 1976 to celebrate the marriage of two of Murail's friends, is taken from the Biblical Song of Songs:

'My sister, my beloved, is a secret garden, a closed fountain, a sealed spring'.

According to Murail, the form grew out of a set of ambiguities and progressive transformations between different types of sounds including so-called 'natural' harmonics (obtained by touching the string lightly) and sul ponticello (playing close to the bridge of the violin), and owes as much to Javanese gamelan as to Western music.

Dark Ground

Tansy Davies

Tansy Davies' boundary-crossing music draws inspiration from a wide range of stimuli, from architecture, sculpture and the natural world, to funk and experimental rock. Dark Ground was composed in 2005 for Joby Burgess. Tansy Davies describes it as 'cool, taut and funky'.

She says: 'Dark Ground inhabits an imaginary space where a ritual takes place. I see the space as a circle, and within that circle, cyclic patterns and formations are enacted, leaving a mark on the space, or an echo that resounds beneath what follows'.

The piece is grounded by a repetitive, circling pedal bass drum beat, orbited by shapes and patterns created from a variety of metal, skin and wood timbres.

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Figments IV & V

Elliott Carter

IV (for viola)

V (for marimba)

Chamber music was absolutely central to Elliott Carter's output, and he continued to compose until the very end of his long and productive life. The six Figments were late works, beginning with two for solo cello in 1994 and 2001. Six years later Carter added a third, for double bass, followed by the two in today's programme. No 4 was composed in 2007 for Samuel Rhodes, viola player of the Juilliard Quartet; while Figment V appeared in 2009 as a 17th birthday present for Carter's grandson, Alexander.

Dog in the Moon

Bethan Morgan-Williams

Many of Bethan Morgan-Williams' works result from her collaboration with specific ensembles and soloists. Dog in the Moon (2020), a joint LSO/BBC commission for Antoine Tamestit and Colin Currie, tackles a painful experience rarely, if ever, addressed in music – the loss of a beloved animal. This miniature tone poem is a touching eulogy for Bethan's cocker spaniel Hettie – 'the most-human dog I've ever known' – who died prematurely last year.

Its title, together with its melodic and rhythmic inflections, derives from Dylan Thomas' poignant reflection on grief, Clown in the Moon, while the pitch content also arises from the musical equivalents of the letters of Hettie's name. The shimmering sound of the vibraphone, coupled with the dark tones of the viola, lend the piece an elegiac, dreamlike quality. The first six sections describe an upward curve, gaining momentum as Hettie engages in typically extrovert spaniel behaviour, from flushing pheasants and parading with a stick, to initiating a boisterous chase. After an ominous pause, the parabola begins a downward journey as energy and hope gradually seep away, punctuated by deceptive flickers of renewed energy. A single upward interval on viola and vibraphone, like a question left hanging in the air, represents the final moment of Hettie's life.

Naturale for viola, percussion and tape

Luciano Berio

Luciano Berio composed Naturale in 1985 for the modern dance company Aterballetto of Reggio Emilia. Most of its material was derived from a larger-scale piece for viola and orchestra, Vocill, which he had completed the previous year. Berio's interest in folk song dated back to his student years and intensified during the 1950s and early 1960s, when he was married to the Armenian soprano Cathy Berberian. One of his best-known concert works, Voci (Folk Songs) for soprano and orchestra (1964), was based on transcriptions of Italian, American and Armenian folk songs. Voci II drew its material from transcriptions of Sicilian folk songs. Its offshoot, Naturale, combines this with actual field recordings, collected by Berio on the streets of Palermo, of the folk-singer Peppino Celano singing the cries of Sicilian street vendors known as *abbagnate*. Berio described himself as 'not an ethnomusicologist, just a pragmatic egoist', and stated that he was only interested in folk techniques and means of expression that he could assimilate stylistically, as part of his quest to unify apparently disparate musical worlds.

Programme notes by Wendy Thompson

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Antoine Tamestit

viola

Antoine Tamestit is recognised internationally as one of the great violists: as a soloist, recitalist and chamber musician. He is notable for his peerless technique and profound musicianship, and for the depth and beauty of his sound, with its rich, burnished quality. His repertoire ranges from the Baroque to the contemporary. He has performed and recorded several world premieres.

Among Tamestit's concerto commissions is the Viola Concerto by Jörg Widmann. Since he gave the world premiere performance in 2015 with the Orchestre de Paris and Paavo Järvi, Tamestit has performed the concerto with the co-commissioners – the Swedish Radio Symphony and Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, both under Daniel Harding – and with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris (again), the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Stavanger Symphony, and the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Tamestit's other world premiere performances and recordings include Thierry Escaich's *La nuit des chants* (2018), the *Concerto for Two Violas* by Bruno Mantovani (written for Tabea Zimmermann and Tamestit) and Olga Neuwirth's *Remnants of Songs*. Works composed for Tamestit also include Neuwirth's *Weariness Heals Wounds* and Gérard Tamestit's *Sakura*.

Tamestit is a founding member of Trio Zimmermann (with Frank Peter Zimmermann and Christian Poltéra). The Trio has recorded a number of acclaimed CDs for BIS Records (including Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, released in May 2019) and performed in Europe's most famous concert halls and series.

Tamestit was born in Paris, and studied with Jean Sulem, Jesse Levine and Tabea Zimmermann. He received several notable prizes, including First Prize at the ARD International Music Competition, the William Primrose Competition and the Young Concert Artists (YCA) International Auditions, won a Borletti-Buitoni Trust award and the Credit Suisse Award in 2008, and participated in BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists Scheme. He plays on a viola made by Stradivarius in 1672, loaned by the Habisreutinger Foundation.

Colin Currie

percussion

Colin Currie is a solo and chamber artist at the peak of his powers. Championing new music at the highest level, he is hailed as being 'at the summit of percussion performance today' (Gramophone). Currie is the soloist of choice for many of today's foremost composers and conductors and he performs with the world's leading orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, London Philharmonic and Minnesota Orchestras.

A dynamic and adventurous soloist, Currie's commitment to commissioning and creating new music was recognised in 2015 by the Royal Philharmonic Society who awarded him the Instrumentalist Award. From his earliest years Currie forged a pioneering path in creating new music for percussion, winning the Royal Philharmonic Society Young Artist Award in 2000 and receiving a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award in 2005. Currie has premiered works by composers such as Steve Reich, Elliott Carter, Louis Andriessen, HK Gruber, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Sir James MacMillan, Brett Dean, Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Helen Grime, Jennifer Higdon, Kalevi Aho, Andy Akiho, Rolf Wallin, Kurt Schwertsik, Andrew Norman, Julia Wolfe and Nico Muhly.

The major highlight of Currie's 2021/22 season is the world premiere of a significant new work by Steve Reich, *Traveler's Prayer*, written for the Colin Currie Group.

Currie's dynamic ensemble the Colin Currie Group was formed in 2006 to celebrate the music of Steve Reich and made its five-star debut at the BBC Proms. Since then, with Reich's personal endorsement Currie and his ensemble have taken on the role of ambassadors of Drumming, which they have performed at many venues and festivals internationally.

Currie is Artist in Association at London's Southbank Centre, where he was the focus of a major percussion festival *Metal Wood Skin* in 2014 and continues to perform there every season.

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