



# APPALACHIAN SPRING

WITH RYAN BANCROFT

**2-3 November 2023**



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# APPALACHIAN SPRING

## WITH RYAN BANCROFT

Kindly supported by Erik Lars Hansen and Vanessa C L Chang

**Thursday 2 November, 7.30pm**, The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

**Friday 3 November, 7.30pm**, City Halls, Glasgow

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**IVES** Three Places in New England

**WALLEN** Dances for Orchestra (World Premiere)

*Commissioned by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Irish Chamber Orchestra and Swedish Chamber Orchestra*

*Interval of 20 minutes*

**COPLAND** Appalachian Spring (complete ballet)

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**Ryan Bancroft** Conductor

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ORCHESTRA

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*Information correct at the time of going to print*

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Huw Daniel  
Kana Kawashima  
Aisling O'Dea  
Amira Bedrush-McDonald  
Sarah Bevan Baker  
Wen Wang

## **Second Violin**

Marcus Barcham Stevens  
Gordon Bragg  
Michelle Dierx  
Rachel Smith  
Niamh Lyons  
Stewart Webster

## **Viola**

Max Mandel  
Ana Dunne Sequi  
Brian Schiele  
Steve King

## **Cello**

Philip Higham  
Christian Elliott  
Donald Gillan  
Eric de Wit

## **Bass**

Nikita Naumov  
Jamie Kenny

## **Flute**

André Cebrián  
Marta Gómez

## **Piccolo**

Marta Gómez

## **Oboe**

Robin Williams  
Katherine Bryer

## **Cor Anglais**

Katherine Bryer

## **Clarinet**

Maximiliano Martín  
William Stafford

## **Bassoon**

Cerys Ambrose-Evans  
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## **Horn**

Benjamin Hartnell Booth  
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## **Trumpet**

Peter Franks  
Brian McGinley

## **Trombone**

Duncan Wilson  
Nigel Cox

## **Timpani**

Louise Lewis Goodwin

## **Percussion**

Iain Sandilands  
Colin Hyson

## **Piano**

Simon Smith

## **Harp**

Eleanor Hudson

### **Louise Lewis Goodwin**

Principal Timpani with Percussion



# WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR

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## **IVES (1874-1954)**

Three Places in New England  
(approx. 1911-14 (rev. 1929))

The "St. Gaudens" in Boston Common (Col. Shaw  
and his Colored Regiment)  
Putnam's Camp, Redding, Connecticut  
The Housatonic at Stockbridge

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## **WALLEN (b. 1958)**

Dances for Orchestra (2023)  
(World Premiere)

*Commissioned by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra,  
Irish Chamber Orchestra and Swedish Chamber Orchestra*

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## **COPLAND (1900-1990)**

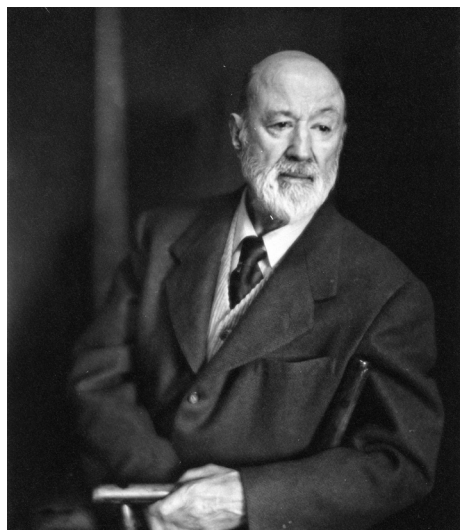
Appalachian Spring (complete ballet)  
(1944)

Prologue  
Eden Valley  
Wedding Day  
Interlude  
Fear in the Night  
Day of Wrath  
Moment of Crisis  
The Lord's Day

Alongside its military and economic might, its precarious politics and its music and movies that have captured almost every corner of the globe, there's a quieter, more visionary side to America that's often overlooked. There's a hopeful idealism to it, a self-reliant pioneer spirit, an authenticity of experience, as well as direct encounters with the world in all its wonder and strangeness. No wonder the road movie (or, indeed, Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*) is such a distinctively American creation.

Two American visionaries bookend tonight's wide-ranging programme – with a brand new piece from one of Britain's most accomplished living composers in between. Whether it's through events and settings that are real, remembered or imagined, Charles Ives and Aaron Copland conjure evocative visions of the richness of their country. Admittedly, Copland might have used a scenario concocted by choreographer Martha Graham rather than grittier reality for his ballet score *Appalachian Spring*, but it nonetheless draws deeply on all-American memories of early settlers, family and community.

In tonight's first piece, however, New England had a far more personal significance for composer Charles Ives, to the extent that his *Three Places in New England* feels almost autobiographical. Ives was born in Danbury, Connecticut, in 1874, and remembered sitting in the town square as a child, listening to his father – an army bandleader during the American Civil War – rehearsing his marching band, alongside competing noise from other similar bands nearby (you'll hear something of that in the second movement of tonight's piece). It was Ives Snr who encouraged his son's sonic experimentation, but despite a lifelong passion for music, Ives Jr ended up working successfully and influentially in insurance for his entire career. He kept the two sides to his



*Charles Ives*

***They would probably have been even more flabbergasted if they discovered what kind of music it was. Even seven decades after his death in 1954, it still sounds fresh and new to us today – sometimes shockingly so.***

life entirely separate: his insurance colleagues were flabbergasted if they ever discovered he composed music.

They would probably have been even more flabbergasted if they discovered what kind of music it was. Even seven decades after his death in 1954, it still sounds fresh and new to us today – sometimes shockingly so. And it's shot through with a rugged, stubborn, distinctively American individualism, as if Ives were forging his own path with little concern for popularity or recognition. That's just as well: he got little of either during his lifetime. His colleague Copland wrote presciently in the mid-1940s: 'It will be a long time before we take the full measure of Charles Ives.' He wasn't wrong.

Alongside its somewhat cussed determination, however, Ives's music also glows with a visionary spirituality and wonder, something he no doubt picked up from the New England transcendentalists such as Emerson and Thoreau, figures he admired throughout his life.

(He'd go on to pay explicit tribute to those two writers' spiritual beliefs in man and nature in his massive, fearsomely difficult 'Concord' Sonata for piano.)

Arguably no Ives piece better encapsulates that paradoxical mix of rugged individualism and spirituality than *Three Places in New England*. He wrote it between 1911 and 1914, and it gained a rather lukewarm reception at its first public performance on 10 January 1931 in Boston – though it went down far better in fashionable, innovation-loving Paris in June that year.

With its layered textures bringing together several musical strands competing for our attention, its endless quotations from hymns, popular songs and marching tunes, its seething masses of noise and its apparently different speeds unfolding simultaneously, *Three Places in New England* provides plenty of examples of Ives the experimentalist. But the music he achieves through these radical techniques is far from an arid, academic exercise: he uses

them to evoke a vivid atmosphere, sometimes a deep spirituality, and often a wistful sense of nostalgia too.

Ives's opening movement, 'The "St. Gaudens" in Boston Common (Col. Shaw and his Colored Regiment)', remembers a memorial in Boston, Massachusetts, to the first all-Black regiment to serve in the Union Army in the US Civil War, headed by Colonel Robert Shaw, and sculpted by August Saint-Gaudens (hence the memorial's nickname). It's a brooding, halting, ghostly march, slow and sombre, that weaves together slave plantation songs, parlour tunes and spectral Civil War army ditties, often only half-heard among clouds of unpredictable harmony. The pace picks up as the movement heads towards a massive climax on a huge C major chord, only to die away again quickly into a final, more defined march, perhaps a lament for the fallen.

Out of that reverential hush erupts Ives's second movement, gaudy, raucous and teeming with patriotic American tunes and more (listen out for 'Yankee Doodle' and even Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries'). We're in Putnam's Camp, Redding, Connecticut, a crucial site in the American War of Independence, where – according to Ives's own description – a young boy has fallen asleep, only to dream of the soldiers and battles of more than a century earlier. Ives collides together his patriotic tunes with joyful abandon, before the music winds down to an almost complete halt, and a slower section effectively divides the orchestra in two, each progressing at its own individual speed. The music quickly builds again, though, and its gleefully chaotic conclusion seems about to launch into 'The Star-Spangled Banner' before a raucous trumpet fanfare cuts things off.

Ives's final movement is also his most personal. 'The Housatonic at Stockbridge' remembers

a walk that the composer took along the Housatonic River in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, with his wife Harmony in 1908, during a honeymoon hiking trip in New England. 'We walked in the meadows along the river, and heard the distant singing from the church across the river,' Ives would later write in his *Memos*. 'The mist had not entirely left the river bed, and the colors, the running water, the banks and elm trees were something that one would always remember.' Ives summons those swirling mists in intricate lines for the violins, while church hymns float from afar on horn and cor anglais. The shattering intensity of the movement's awe-inspiring climax – maybe representing the River finally gushing into the Atlantic at Stratford, Connecticut – is surely an expression, not of anger or anguish, but simply of bliss.

Born in Belize, British composer Errollyn Wallen now lives and creates her music in a lighthouse on the north coast of Scotland. She's been prolific across many different musical forms and styles, from the early song cycle *Meet Me at Harold Moore's* (also one of her first recordings) to no fewer than 22 operas, including her expansion of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, *Dido's Ghost*, performed at the 2021 Edinburgh International Festival. She was the first black woman composer to have a work performed at the BBC Proms, and her reimagining of Parry's 'Jerusalem', *Jerusalem – our clouded hills*, was commissioned for the 2020 Last Night of the Proms and is dedicated to the Windrush generation. She writes about her new work, *Dances for Orchestra*, and the piece's connections with the SCO:

*"Composing Dances for Orchestra was a joyful experience. Every note was composed with the idea of dance and movement as being integral.*

*I draw loosely from different dance forms such as the sarabande, salsa and waltz but I have also concocted imaginary dances.*





*Errollyn Wallen*

*Dances for Orchestra is full of contrasts with a sustained energy running throughout, and I asked for Ryan Bancroft to conduct the world premiere as he, like me, studied dance and has such a magical way with orchestras.*

*Dances for Orchestra is full of contrasts with a sustained energy running throughout, and I asked for Ryan Bancroft to conduct the world premiere as he, like me, studied dance and has such a magical way with orchestras.*

*Dances for Orchestra is dedicated to two dear friends, Su-a Lee and Hamish Napier, celebrating their marriage to each other."*

With tonight's final piece, Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, we return to our earlier theme of a particularly American sense of visionary spirituality. Following studies in Paris with the influential Nadia Boulanger, Copland had explored an angular, dissonant modernism earlier in his career. Guided by his social conscience, however, he turned towards a simpler, more immediately accessible style from the late 1930s, in music that he hoped would speak directly to listeners, and celebrate the best of American history and values. Just think of the stirring *Fanfare for a Common Man* (which makes a reappearance in the finale of

his questing Third Symphony), or the hijinks of *Billy the Kid* or *Rodeo*, or indeed the touching nobility of his *Lincoln Portrait*.

Most famous of the lot, however, is *Appalachian Spring*, which Copland wrote in 1943 and 1944 following a request from choreographer and dancer Martha Graham in 1942 for a ballet 'with an American theme'. Her idea for a scenario couldn't have been simpler: a rural Pennsylvania community, two young newlyweds, a visiting preacher, and a few wise lessons dispensed by an older settler. It's a generic-sounding story in which hardly anything happens, with characters that are little more than archetypes, and yet *Appalachian Spring* conjures a truly moving, visionary parable about American values, pioneers conquering a new land, strength, determination and resilience.

There's little of the wild experimentalism of *Lies* here – though perhaps some similarities in *Appalachian Spring*'s gentle dissonances, its



*Aaron Copland*

***Nevertheless, with its wide-open sounds, its hope, expectation and childlike joy, *Appalachian Spring* is one of classical music's rare works of unfettered optimism – surely another crucial ingredient in visionary American idealism.***

hymn-like harmonies and its hoedown tunes. The full ballet score, which you hear tonight, features darker, more troubling episodes that Copland omitted from his more familiar suites. Having wed the young couple, the preacher warns of the dangers of the encroaching Civil War (evoked through the distant sounds of military drums), to the evident anguish of husband and wife. Even here, however, both eventually regain their earlier sense of calm with the support of their community.

The work received its final title only shortly prior to its premiere, before which time Copland had simply called it 'Ballet for Martha', which remains its subtitle. And that last-minute naming inadvertently caused a couple of ironies. Copland admitted to being amused later in life when commentators remarked on how well he'd captured the Appalachians in springtime. Yes, there's plenty of freshness and a sense of promise and new life in his music, but the 'spring' of the title actually refers to a source of water: Graham took the title from a

poem by Hart Crane that refers to 'wat'ry webs of upper flows'. And Copland also admitted to a certain regret at including the score's most famous tune, the Shaker hymn 'Simple Gifts' (probably better known to Brits as 'Lord of the Dance'), saying: 'My research evidently was not very thorough, since I did not realise that there have never been Shaker settlements in rural Pennsylvania!'

He was aware, too, that his music's simplicity and sincerity may end up tipping over into empty sentimentality or even mawkishness, writing late in his life: 'I have often admonished orchestras, professional and otherwise, not to get too sweet or too sentimental with it.' Nevertheless, with its wide-open sounds, its hope, expectation and childlike joy, *Appalachian Spring* is one of classical music's rare works of unfettered optimism – surely another crucial ingredient in visionary American idealism.

© David Kettle

Conductor

## RYAN BANCROFT



Ryan Bancroft first came to international attention in 2018 when he won First Prize and Audience Prize at the Malko Competition for Young Conductors in Copenhagen. Since 2021, Bancroft has been Principal Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. Bancroft was invited to become the Tapiola Sinfonietta's Artist in Association from 2021/22 onwards. In 2021, Bancroft was announced as Chief Conductor Designate of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, and took up the Chief Conductor position in September 2023.

Bancroft has conducted European orchestras including the Philharmonia, London Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, Orchestre Nationale du Capitole de Toulouse, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Danish National Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic, and Ensemble Intercontemporain. In North America, this season he makes his debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at Hollywood Bowl, The Cleveland Orchestra at Blossom Festival, and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, and previously has worked with the Toronto Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Dallas Symphony and Minnesota Symphony.

Bancroft has a passion for contemporary music and has performed with Amsterdam's acclaimed Nieuw Ensemble, assisted Pierre Boulez in a performance of his *Sur Incises* in Los Angeles, premiered works by Sofia Gubaidulina, John Cage, James Tenney, Anne LeBaron, and has worked closely with improvisers such as Wadada Leo Smith and Charlie Haden.

*For full biography please visit [sco.org.uk](https://sco.org.uk)*

Biography

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The Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) is one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies and has been a galvanizing force in Scotland's music scene since its inception in 1974. The SCO believes that access to world-class music is not a luxury but something that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in, helping individuals and communities everywhere to thrive. Funded by the Scottish Government, City of Edinburgh Council and a community of philanthropic supporters, the SCO has an international reputation for exceptional, idiomatic performances: from mainstream classical music to newly commissioned works, each year its wide-ranging programme of work is presented across the length and breadth of Scotland, overseas and increasingly online.

Equally at home on and off the concert stage, each one of the SCO's highly talented and creative musicians and staff is passionate about transforming and enhancing lives through the power of music. The SCO's Creative Learning programme engages people of all ages and backgrounds with a diverse range of projects, concerts, participatory workshops and resources. The SCO's current five-year Residency in Edinburgh's Craigmillar builds on the area's extraordinary history of Community Arts, connecting the local community with a national cultural resource.

An exciting new chapter for the SCO began in September 2019 with the arrival of dynamic young conductor Maxim Emelyanychev as the Orchestra's Principal Conductor. His tenure has recently been extended until 2028. The SCO and Emelyanychev released their first album together (Linn Records) in November 2019 to widespread critical acclaim. Their second recording together, of Mendelssohn symphonies, is due for release in November 2023.

The SCO also has long-standing associations with many eminent guest conductors and directors including Andrew Manze, Pekka Kuusisto, François Leleux, Nicola Benedetti, Isabelle van Keulen, Anthony Marwood, Richard Egarr, Mark Wigglesworth, John Storgårds and Conductor Emeritus Joseph Swensen.

The Orchestra's current Associate Composer is Jay Capperauld. The SCO enjoys close relationships with numerous leading composers and has commissioned around 200 new works, including pieces by the late Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Sir James MacMillan, Anna Clyne, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Karin Rehnqvist, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Nico Muhly.



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