



Summer Tour 2024

A SUMMER SERENADE

With the SCO WIND SOLOISTS

26-28 June 2024

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PROGRAMME

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A SUMMER SERENADE

WITH THE SCO WIND SOLOISTS

Kindly supported by Eriadne & George Mackintosh and Claire & Anthony Tait.

Wednesday 26 June, 7.30pm, Burgh Hall, Dunoon

Thursday 27 June, 7.30pm, McLaren Hall, Killin

Friday 28 June, 7.30pm, Dollar Academy

GIPPS Seascape

FRANÇAIX Quatuor

CAPLET Suite Persane

Interval of 20 minutes

McCRAE Trio

BIRD Serenade, Op 40

SCO Wind Soloists



SCOTTISH
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ORCHESTRA

4 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5AB

+44 (0)131 557 6800 | info@sco.org.uk | sco.org.uk

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Our Musicians

YOUR SCO WIND SOLOISTS

Information correct at the time of going to print

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
Alison Green

Horn

Anna Drysdale
Jamie Shield

Maximiliano Martín

Principal Clarinet



WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR

GIPPS (1921-1999)

Seascape (1958)

FRANÇAIX (1912-1997)

Quatuor (1933)

Allegro

Andante

Allegro molto

Allegro vivo

CAPLET (1878-1925)

Suite Persane (1901)

Scharki

Nihavend

Iskia Samaïsi

McCRAE (1961-2005)

Trio (2005)

Introduction

Scherzo

Air

March and Reel

Coda

BIRD (1856-1923)

Serenade, Op 40 (1898)

Allegro Moderato

Adagio

Allegro Assai

Finale – Allegro Energico

Tonight's concert represents a true musical voyage across the globe – and it also serves to demonstrate the richness and diversity of music that the wind ensemble has inspired from worldwide composers. We begin with a musician on England's south coast, gazing out across the Channel to France, before we arrive in France itself to discover a composer deeply inhaling the heady perfumes of the Near East. After a quick stop at home in Scotland, we jet off to the USA for a little-known gem from an equally little-known composer.

We start, however, with a remarkable but frustratingly overlooked figure in British music. Born in Bexhill-on-Sea in 1921, Ruth Gipps came from a strongly musical family – both of her parents were accomplished musicians – and had her first work premiered and published when she was just eight. She went on to found two orchestras (the London Repertoire Orchestra and Chanticleer Orchestra), as well as chairing the Composer's Guild of Great Britain in the 1960s. But, perhaps unsurprisingly, she encountered barriers of discrimination throughout her life – which only served to strengthen her sense of determination. Some called her tough and steely, though she no doubt needed a cast-iron outer shell to fend off the barbed rejections she received as a woman who dared to consider herself a composer in the mid-20th century.

But she was an exceptional, eloquent musical creator (as well as an oboist and pianist, a conductor and a teacher), and she composed a wide range of pieces, including five symphonies, seven concertos and many chamber and choral works. Her musical style, too, is lyrical and immediate, often strongly reminiscent of Vaughan Williams,



Ruth Gipps

Gipps took inspiration for *Seascape's* music, she said, from a brief stay in Broadstairs, Kent, where she remembered hearing the sea at night from her hotel room.

with whom she studied at London's Royal College of Music.

As an oboist, Gipps had a particular fondness for wind music, and co-founded the all-women Portia Wind Ensemble in 1953. It was for that group that she wrote her *Seascape* in 1958, and the Portia players gave its premiere two years later. Gipps took inspiration for *Seascape's* music, she said, from a brief stay in Broadstairs, Kent, where she remembered hearing the sea at night from her hotel room. Rippling, wave-like figures open the work, soon joined by a keening melody for Gipps's own oboe. Horns bring warmth to the piece's gently flowing opening section, before a sinuous cor anglais melody leads us into her more rhythmic central panel – though those rippling figurations soon return to lead the piece to its sonorous conclusion.

From Gipps dozing to the sound of lapping waves where the English Channel meets the

North Sea, we cross that stretch of water to France for tonight's next piece. And we head inland to Le Mans, famed for its motorsport connections, but also the birthplace of composer Jean Françaix. He was just six when he began composing in 1918, and he went on to study with composition *pedagogue extraordinaire* Nadia Boulanger, who considered him one of her finest pupils. He died as recently as 1997, and wrote prolifically during his long life (he described himself as 'constantly composing', barely finishing one piece before launching into the next). But he maintained a cheerful, neo-classical, easy-on-the-ear lightness throughout his output – which took in concertos, symphonies, operas and plenty more.

Unusually, in his 1933 Wind Quartet, the 21-year-old Françaix omitted the customary horn from a standard wind quintet line-up. That wasn't by chance or capriciousness, however. He wrote the piece for the main woodwind teachers at



Jean Françaix

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the music conservatoire in his birth town, where his father was director. 'As the horn tutor who was there at the time,' Françaix later admitted, 'was never quite sure what sound would emerge from his instrument – his fame was as a specialist in the art of playing several notes at the same time – I had decided not to "rouse the volcano", and wrote a quartet without horn that would be less likely to produce disconcerting surprises.'

The result is music of irrepressible fun and good humour. In the Quartet, he manages to compress a conventional four-movement symphonic form into barely ten minutes, with a perky opening Allegro, an impressionistic, pastel-hued Andante with a winding oboe melody, a dashing, swaggering Allegro molto, and a bustling finale with a distinctive, repeated-note theme.

From Le Mans, we nip a couple of hours up the autoroute to Paris for tonight's next

piece. Though he was prominent and highly regarded in his own time, we might not remember French composer André Caplet much these days – and if we do, it's probably as an expert arranger of some of Debussy's piano music for orchestra, including *Pagodes* and *Clair de lune*. Indeed, it was Debussy who championed Caplet early in his career, drawing attention to the younger man's talents under the guise of his music critic alter ego, Monsieur Croche (Mr Quaver).

Born in Le Havre in 1878, Caplet won numerous prizes at the Paris Conservatoire, and even beat Ravel to the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1901, though he cut short the residency at the Italian capital's Villa Medici which he received as a prize (for reasons that are not entirely clear) and headed back to Paris, where he became a close friend of Debussy, Ravel, Falla and others. Volunteering for combat in the Great War had a profound effect on his later life, however: he was caught in a



André Caplet

The orient – and all the mystery, opulence and sensuality that came with it – was very much in vogue among Parisian society at the time, and Caplet's *Suite* fits in perfectly with an imagined, idealised vision of the Near East.

German poison gas attack, which left him with health complications for many years, and may have contributed to his early death, at just 46, in 1925, when a simple cold developed quickly into pleurisy.

His *Suite persane* for ten wind instruments, however, came long before the dramas of his later life. He wrote it in 1901 while still a student at the Conservatoire, probably inspired by the oriental exhibits he'd encountered at the Paris Exposition Universelle the previous year. It was premiered on 9 March 1901 in the Salle Érard, in an all-Caplet concert given by the Société de Musique Moderne pour Instruments à Vent and flautist Georges Barrère. And it gained a rave review from *Le Monde Musical*, which called the *Suite* 'a very ingenious work of instrumental combinations and much inspiration'.

The Orient – and all the mystery, opulence and sensuality that came with it – was very

much in vogue among Parisian society at the time, and Caplet's *Suite* fits in perfectly with an imagined, idealised vision of the Near East. But it's no mere orientalist fantasy: Caplet clearly researched his subject matter, using an authentic Persian melody in his first movement (or so he claimed), and evoking a particular Arabic *maqam* (or scale, a bit like an Indian raga) in the second.

The restless first movement, 'Scharki', is named after a hot, humid wind that blows in the Persian Gulf in early summer and early winter. The music opens strikingly with an exotic Persian melody first heard unadorned in unison flutes and clarinets, though Caplet later clothes it in Debussian harmonies that would have been far more familiar to his Parisian listeners. The second movement's title, 'Nihavend', refers to a particular *maqam* or scale used in Persian music. The movement opens with a melancholy, rhapsodic flute theme, harmonised using bare intervals,



Kevin McCrae

Kevin McCrae was for many years the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's co-principal cellist, and played a particularly active role in the Orchestra's education work too.

before a more overtly Western-sounding central section. The final movement, 'Iskia Samaïsi', is the longest and most elaborate of the three, colliding together contrasting musical ideas in its opening section, before slowing down for what feels like a kind of love song, led by a horn melody, in its sultry central section.

We make the short hop back to Scotland for tonight's next piece. Kevin McCrae was for many years the Co-Principal Cello in the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and played a particularly active role in the Orchestra's education work too. He also performed with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and with Manchester's Hallé. But his musical passions reached far wider: he was also a respected pianist, as well as a conductor, composer and arranger. In fact, these other roles took on such a prominence in his career that he left the SCO in 2004 to pursue them, and his music was later heard accompanying several Scottish folk musicians and in

TV soundtracks. McCrae died in 2005, following a tragic accident.

His Wind Trio – for flute, clarinet and bassoon – was premiered at the St Magnus Festival in Orkney in 2005. It takes the form of five brief movements, all of which run without pauses. After a brisk, breezy and crisply rhythmic 'Introduction', McCrae moves on to a witty 'Scherzo' (which places the bassoon firmly in the spotlight in its central section) and an 'Air' with distinctive Scottish inflections to its lilting flute tune. The clarinet kicks off the nimble 'March and Reel', while the concluding 'Coda' returns us to the briskness of the opening.

We close tonight's concert on the other side of the Atlantic – or actually, to be completely accurate, in Germany. Arthur Bird was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1856, but studied first in Berlin, then later in Weimar with Franz Liszt. And although he returned to America, he then returned again to Europe,



Arthur Homer Bird

Bird's Serenade comes from 1898, and it's a piece full of boundless, open-air optimism and positivity, making rich use of his ten-strong wind ensemble, all of whom are given their moments to shine.

living in Germany from 1890 until his death in Berlin in 1923. He's a fascinating if little-known figure in early American music, however, from a time when US composers fixed their attention firmly on their revered European colleagues for inspiration. Not quite all of them, however: one of Bird's roles was as European correspondent for US music journals *Étude* and *Musical Leader*, in which he made clear his profound distaste for the musical upstart Richard Strauss and his new-fangled thinking. To no avail, as history has demonstrated.

Bird's *Serenade* comes from 1898, and it's a piece full of boundless, open-air optimism and positivity, making rich use of his ten-strong wind ensemble, all of whom are given their moments to shine.

A perky oboe melody launches the richly scored first movement, though the tune is later shared between the ensemble's instruments. After a slightly more unsettled

central development section, and travels through some darker harmonies, the brighter opening mood quickly returns. A solo cor anglais opens the thoughtful second movement with a plaintive song, though its cousin the oboe later guides the music into in a more positive direction, before the cor anglais once again re-establishes the original pensive mood.

The third movement acts as a kind of scherzo, with the first flautist offering a scampering melody, and calmer respite in its central section. The finale opens with what might seem a surprisingly relaxed, lilting melody, though it's answered by a more foursquare tune shared between horns and clarinets. The oboe later introduces a more contrapuntal section, in which Bird shows off his skills at weaving together individual musical lines – and thereby showcasing the talents of all his ensemble's players.

© David Kettle

Conductor

SCO WIND SOLOISTS



The Scottish Chamber Orchestra includes a double-wind section of outstanding players who also appear as soloists with the Orchestra.

Inspired by the legacy of the great Mozartian conductors of the SCO, including Charles Mackerras, the players are known for their stylish and exuberant performances of repertoire ranging from the celebrated divertimenti and wind serenades of the 18th century to music of the present day.

The SCO Wind Soloists appear regularly in Scotland's main cities and further afield, including the Highlands and Islands. They have also performed at Wigmore Hall, the Palace of Holyroodhouse in the presence of the then HRH the former Duke of Rothesay (now HM the King) and at the Aix-en-Provence Easter Festival. Since 2016 they have partnered annually with wind students of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Side-by-Side rehearsals and concerts.

As an ensemble, the SCO Wind Soloists have recorded divertimenti and serenades by Mozart and Beethoven (Linn Records).

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk

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