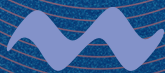


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MACMILLAN Tryst

WIDMANN ad absurdum

Interval of 20 minutes

WIDMANN Con Brio

ADAMS Chamber Symphony

Maxim Emelyanychev Conductor

Sergei Nakariakov Trumpet

Jamie Pettinger DJ

Maxim Emelyanychev



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Principal Bassoon



WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR

MACMILLAN (b. 1959)

Tryst (1989)

WIDMANN (b. 1973)

ad absurdum (2002)

Con Brio (2008)

Motif I

Motif II

ADAMS (b. 1947)

Chamber Symphony (1992)

Mongrel Airs

Aria with Walking Bass

Roadrunner

Comedy might not be the first thing you'd associate with the emotional power and high drama of classical music. But in fact, there's a lot of it about. Just think of the awkward (and intentional) 'wrong notes' in Mozart's *A Musical Joke*, for example, or of Saint-Saëns's comic creature portraits in *The Carnival of the Animals*.

The comedy in tonight's concert, however, is of a more sophisticated, perhaps more obsessive kind – the sort of absurd humour you might more readily associate with Monty Python or Reeves and Mortimer than with someone like Michael McIntyre. Indeed, by the time the piece that gives tonight's concert its name finally runs out of steam, you might even wonder whether it's been that funny after all.

And comedy, it has to be said, isn't high on the agenda in tonight's opening piece. Instead, Sir James MacMillan's *Tryst* offers seriousness of intent, grittiness of language, and also disarming lyricism. MacMillan is Scotland's most prominent contemporary composer, a musician who works internationally as a conductor and musical creator, and who has produced a huge and very diverse body of work, often marked by his strong Catholic faith.

Tryst, however, comes from relatively early in MacMillan's career – from 1989, in fact, the year before the BBC Proms premiere of his orchestral work *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* really brought him to international attention. And *Tryst* also serves to demonstrate MacMillan's close connections with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. It was the SCO – and conductor Paul Daniel – who gave the piece its premiere at the 1989 St Magnus Festival in Orkney, where MacMillan was composer in residence. And



Sir James MacMillan

Sir James MacMillan's *Tryst* offers seriousness of intent, grittiness of language, and also disarming lyricism.

it was *Tryst's* huge success that partly led to MacMillan's appointment as SCO Associate Composer, a role he held for several years in the 1990s.

It's also a piece with clear personal significance for the composer, sharing a traditional-style tune with a few other works he wrote around the same time, as well as an earlier song setting. (Its title has also gone on to form the name of the Ayrshire music festival that MacMillan established in 2014, the Cumnock Tryst.) MacMillan has explained that its title refers to a kind of meeting place, perhaps a secret location for lovers' assignations, or in the case of this music, a rendezvous for musics he holds dear, and for musical styles and forms that are important to him.

MacMillan explains the piece in his own programme note, written for *Tryst's* premiere in 1989:

A few years ago I came across a love poem by William Soutar written in broad Scots called The Tryst, which I set to a very simple melody. This melody has persistently appeared, in various guises, in many works composed since – a congregational mass setting, a tiny fragment for violin and piano (After the Tryst) and more recently in my music theatre piece Búsqueda. Not only has it cropped up again in this piece, but it has also provided both the title and the emotional core of the music.

Its melodic characteristics, matching the original words, seem to imply many very strong associations – commitment, sanctity, intimacy, faith (it is used specifically in the Credo section of Búsqueda), love, but it is also saturated with a sadness as if all these things are about to expire.

The music is in one continuous movement, but divided into five clearly defined sections,

the slow middle section being the point where the melodic potential of the original tune is again explored. It is here elongated and ornamented on the strings, behind which one hears pulsating, throbbing colour chords. The opening section of the work is fast, energetic and rhythmic. The second section begins with slow homophonic wind chords which are interrupted by fast, violent interjections on the strings. These interjections gradually become more pervasive and expansive while the wind music transforms itself into shorter more brutal intrusions (ie the two musics influence each other so that one eventually becomes the other and vice versa).

After the slow third section, the melodic material from the opening is now presented in a quick, rhythmically brittle but simple structured verse and refrain form. The final section combines fast music with solemn chordal ideas from the middle section. Tryst is dedicated to Susan Loy, my grandmother, who died in 1989.

From Scotland we move to Germany, and to the piece that gives tonight's concert its title. Jörg Widmann is one of today's most in-demand musicians, as a composer, conductor and clarinettist. He's a major figure in new music, and has premiered several new clarinet concertos by prominent composers (including Wolfgang Rihm and Aribert Reimann) as well as teaching composition at Freiburg's University of Music and at the Barenboim-Said Academy in Berlin.

Widmann provides his own succinct note for his trumpet concerto *ad absurdum*, which he wrote in 2002 for the remarkable Russian-born Israeli trumpeter Sergei Nakariakov, tonight's soloist:

This piece already begins at a finishing point: the tempo is so fast that it cannot be increased.

What interests me is the point at which conventional virtuosity suddenly tips over into an acoustic grey area in which rapid successive points are perceived as a single surface.

Although the trumpet part verges on the almost unplayable, it deliberately offers no development possibilities in the literal sense of the term. The trumpeter is a playmaker who gleefully displays maximum velocity right from the start, yet, revolving in his momentum strangely stolidly, he is ultimately imprisoned in his own virtuosity and suffocates.

ad absurdum crashes into existence at a tempo marked in Widmann's score as *Prestissimo sempre* – or always as fast as possible – and with a (literally) breathless, unrelenting solo part that places seemingly superhuman demands on its soloist. Fragments of melody emerge among its minimalist-style patterns, and the orchestra's violins later give the soloist a few moments of respite. Indeed, Widmann's writing pushes his orchestral players to their limits, too, with frantically fast passages for flutes, strings and percussion. There are sudden halts, a strange clicking accompaniment (a metronome?) passed around within the orchestra's strings, and frenzied running patterns from an electric barrel organ. In the end, rather than reaching a climax, *ad absurdum* simply seems to stop – after all, it's been virtually a climax from start to finish.

If *ad absurdum* pushes the concerto format beyond all reasonable limits, then in tonight's next piece, Widmann does something similar with the music of one of his most illustrious predecessors: Ludwig van Beethoven. Though whether Widmann's 2008 *Con brio* is subversive and satirical, or celebratory and warmly affectionate – well, that's up to you to decide.



Jörg Widmann

If *ad absurdum* pushes the concerto format beyond all reasonable limits, then in tonight's next piece, Widmann does something similar with the music of one of his most illustrious predecessors: Ludwig van Beethoven.

'The most important thing in my artistic career is to combine tradition and innovation,' Widmann has said. And in the way it places Beethoven amid a musical landscape very much of our own times, you could hardly find a more appropriate description than that of *Con brio*.

The piece's title means 'with vigour', and it was one of Beethoven's favourite markings on his scores, encapsulating the bristling energy and heroism that mark out much of his music. Widmann's *Con brio* was one of six pieces commissioned by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra to accompany a complete cycle of Beethoven's symphonies – it was intended for a concert featuring the Seventh and Eighth.

And accordingly, the piece represents a restless interplay between Beethoven's musical language and Widmann's own,

more contemporary sounds. Sometimes it's Widmann's provocative gestures that seem to intrude on Beethoven's musical world. At other times, however, it's Beethoven-style sounds that emerge from Widmann's more dissonant, colouristic soundscape. The result brings in tongue-in-cheek humour, mischievous wit, and also a kind of volatile energy verging at times on deranged frenzy (which might well remind you of the piece we've just heard).

Con brio begins with portentous timpani strokes and decisive orchestral chords, both of which will play crucial roles throughout the piece. Instruments are propelled by the music's unstoppable energy to generate their own jagged, dissonant lines, or to multiply in filigree detail, or simply to break down into half-heard flutterings and mutterings. A sudden speed-up kicked off by lyrical woodwind figures propels us towards the



John Adams

Adams might have started off his career as a fully signed-up minimalist – in pieces such as *Shaker Loops* and *Phrygian Gates* – but he quickly expanded his musical horizons into the kind of rich, energetic and thoroughly distinctive music that he writes today, and which tonight's Chamber Symphony encapsulates.

work's mysterious, skittering ending, which sounds like an enormous machine winding down until it grinds to a halt.

There's plenty of humour in the music of US composer John Adams – even among the often witty titles to his works, which include John's *Book of Alleged Dances*, *Naïve and Sentimental Music*, and the famous *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*. (Not for nothing did he title his 2007 follow-up to tonight's piece, not what would have been the rather mundane Chamber Symphony No 2, but the far more Hollywood B movie-style' *Son of Chamber Symphony*.)

Adams might have started off his career as a fully signed-up minimalist – in pieces such as *Shaker Loops* and *Phrygian Gates* – but he quickly expanded his musical horizons into the kind of rich, energetic and thoroughly distinctive music that he writes today,

and which tonight's Chamber Symphony encapsulates.

In the piece, he seems like he's maybe about to poke merciless fun at one of his illustrious but notorious forebears. The Chamber Symphony's music, however, is far more complex and elusive than that kind of blunt take-down, and even suggests parallels with the kind of virtuosic velocity we experienced earlier.

Adams introduces the Chamber Symphony in his own programme note:

The Chamber Symphony, written between September and December of 1992, was commissioned by the Gerbode Foundation of San Francisco for the San Francisco Contemporary Chamber Players, who gave the American premiere on April 12. The world premiere performances was given in The

Hague, Holland by the Schoenberg Ensemble in January of 1993.

Written for 15 instruments and lasting 22 minutes, the Chamber Symphony bears a suspicious resemblance to its eponymous predecessor, the Opus 9 of Arnold Schoenberg. The choice of instruments is roughly the same as Schoenberg's, although mine includes parts for synthesizer, percussion (a trap set), trumpet and trombone. However, whereas the Schoenberg Symphony is in one uninterrupted structure, mine is broken into three discrete movements, 'Mongrel Airs', 'Aria with Walking Bass' and 'Roadrunner'. The titles give a hint of the general ambience of the music.

I originally set out to write a children's piece, and my intentions were to sample the voices of children and work them into a fabric of acoustic and electronic instruments. But before I began that project I had another one of those strange interludes that often lead to a new piece. This one involved a brief moment of what Melville called 'the shock of recognition': I was sitting in my studio, studying the score to Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony, and as I was doing so I became aware that my seven-year-old son Sam was in the adjacent room watching cartoons (good cartoons, old ones from the '50s). The hyperactive, instantly aggressive and acrobatic scores for the cartoons mixed in my head with the Schoenberg music, itself hyperactive, acrobatic and not a little aggressive, and I realized suddenly how much these two traditions had in common.

For a long time my music has been conceived for large forces and has involved broad brushstrokes on big canvasses. These works have been either symphonic or operatic, and even the ones for smaller forces like Phrygian Gates, Shaker Loops or Grand Pianola Music have essentially been studies in the acoustical

power of massed sonorities. Chamber music, with its inherently polyphonic and democratic sharing of roles, was always difficult for me to compose. But the Schoenberg Symphony provided a key to unlock that door, and it did so by suggesting a format in which the weight and mass of a symphonic work could be married to the transparency and mobility of a chamber work. The tradition of American cartoon music – and I freely acknowledge that I am only one of a host of people scrambling to jump on that particular bandwagon – also suggested a further model for a music that was at once flamboyantly virtuosic and polyphonic. There were several other models from earlier in the century, most of which I come to know as a performer, which also served as suggestive: Milhaud's La création du monde, Stravinsky's Octet and L'histoire du soldat, and Hindemith's marvellous Kleine Kammermusik, a little-known masterpiece for woodwind quintet that predates Ren and Stimpy by nearly 60 years.

Despite all the good humor, my Chamber Symphony turned out to be shockingly difficult to play. Unlike Phrygian Gates or Pianola, with their fundamentally diatonic palettes, this new piece, in what I suppose could be termed my post-Klinghoffer language, is linear and chromatic. Instruments are asked to negotiate unreasonably difficult passages and alarmingly fast tempi, often to the inexorable click of the trap set. But therein, I suppose, lies the perverse charm of the piece. ('Discipliner et Punire' was the original title of the first movement, before I decided on 'Mongrel Airs' to honor a British critic who complained that my music lacked breeding).

© David Kettle

(John Adams note reprinted with kind permission of www.earbox.com)

Conductor

MAXIM EMELYANYCHEV



At the Scottish Chamber Orchestra Maxim Emelyanychev follows in the footsteps of just five previous Principal Conductors in the Orchestra's 49-year history; Roderick Brydon (1974-1983), Jukka-Pekka Saraste (1987-1991), Ivor Bolton (1994-1996), Joseph Swensen (1996-2005) and Robin Ticciati (2009-2018).

Recent highlights have included a US tour and a performance at the London Proms with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and his debuts with the Berliner Philharmoniker, New Japan Philharmonic, Osaka Kansai Philharmonic, Bergen Philharmonic, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Chambre de Paris.

In 2023/24 Maxim's highlights included the following debuts: Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, SWR Symphonieorchester Stuttgart, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France, Mozarteum Orchestra at the Salzburg Festival. He returns to the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

He regularly collaborates with renowned artists such as Max Emanuel Cenčić, Patrizia Ciofi, Joyce DiDonato, Franco Fagioli, Richard Goode, Sophie Karthäuser, Stephen Hough, Katia and Marielle Labèque, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Julia Lezhneva, Alexei Lubimov, Riccardo Minasi, Xavier Sabata and Dmitry Sinkovsky.

Maxim is also a highly respected chamber musician. His most recent recording (on Aparté), of Brahms Violin Sonatas with long-time collaborator and friend Aylen Pritchen has attracted outstanding reviews internationally. With the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Maxim has made critically-acclaimed recordings of Schubert Symphony No 9 – the symphony with which he made his debut with the orchestra – and Mendelssohn Symphonies Nos 3 'Scottish' and 5 'Reformation' both on Linn Records. Their latest recording, of Schubert Symphonies Nos 5 and 8, was released in November.

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk

Trumpet

SERGEI NAKARIAKOV



Sergei Nakariakov, the Israeli-Russian trumpet player, has established himself as one of the most thought-after trumpet players on the international stage. Gifted with a rare combination of stunning virtuosity, a suave and velvet-toned sound and a deep sensitivity he was named as “The Paganini of the trumpet” and “Caruso of the trumpet”.

Nakariakov's season is marked by a series of high-profile concerts. In addition to the world premiere of Fazil Say's concerto for two trumpets, Nakariakov will present his artistic diversity with concerts in Europe, South Korea, Hong Kong, Argentina, Brazil and Japan.

He performs with many of the world's most respected conductors including Valery Gergiev, Vladimir Spivakov, Saulius Sondeckis, Christoph Eschenbach, Yuri Temirkanov, Jiří Bělohlávek, Jaap van Zweden, Ton Koopman, Yuri Bashmet, Sir Neville Marriner, Gábor Takács-Nagy, Mikhail Pletnev, Dmitri Sitkovetsky, Kent Nagano, Vladimir Ashkenazy. Furthermore, he regularly collaborates with many of the world's leading musicians like Martha Argerich, Mischa Maisky, Emmanuel Pahud, Vadim Repin, Julian Rachlin, Dmitri Sitkovetsky for chamber music projects. With the pianist Maria Meerovitch and his sister, Vera Okhotnikova, he combines a long musical-friendly collaboration. Nakariakov's repertoire covers not only the entire range of original literature for trumpet, but is continually expanding into broader territories, comprising many fascinating transcriptions and commissions by Peter Ruzicka, Mikhail Pletnev, Uri Brener, Enjott Schneider, Fazil Say and Jörg Widmann.

Sergei Nakariakov is an exclusive artist at AR Ressonance with his trumpet. He plays the flugelhorn by Antoine Courtois, Paris.

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk

DJ

JAMIE PETTINGER



Jamie Pettinger (aka St. Sunday) is the station manager and co-founder of Edinburgh's community radio station EHFM. He hosts a weekly Tuesday morning show on the station, and has worked in music for the last eight years at Edinburgh International Festival, Sneaky Pete's, and currently at LUCKYME® Records.

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SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



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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, was released in November 2023. Their latest recording, of Schubert Symphonies Nos 5 and 8, was released on 1 November.

The SCO also has long-standing associations with many eminent guest conductors and directors including Principal Guest Conductor Andrew Manze, Pekka Kuusisto, François Leleux, Nicola Benedetti, Isabelle van Keulen, Anthony Marwood, Richard Egarr, Mark Wigglesworth, Lorenza Borrani 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 Sir James MacMillan, Anna Clyne, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Karin Rehnqvist, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Nico Muhly and the late Peter Maxwell Davies.

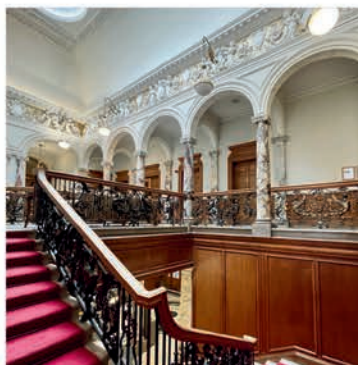
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An SCO Academy participant performs on Glasgow City Halls' stage with the full Orchestra, May 2024 © Christopher Bowen.

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