

# SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

## Masterworks 2019 MacMillan Tryst

### Teachers' Resource Pack

Created by Andrew Lockyer and Rachel Leach, 2019

Masterworks 2019 project is kindly supported by The Misses Barrie Charitable Trust, Aberdeen City Council Creative Funding, PF Charitable Trust, Gordon Fraser Charitable Trust, JTH Charitable Trust, The Educational Institute of Scotland, Tay Charitable Trust and Aberdeen Endowments Trust.

Masterworks 2019 is delivered in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, East Ayrshire Council and Drake Music Scotland.



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## INTRODUCTION

This pack is designed to help you and your class to prepare for the SCO Masterworks concert featuring *Tryst* by Sir James MacMillan. Inspired by a Scottish love poem turned first into a ballad and then fleshed out for this orchestra in 1989, *Tryst* is an exciting, all encompassing and epic exploration of MacMillan's unique soundworld. Our presenter Rachel Leach will give a detailed introduction to the piece and also talk to the composer himself, who will be conducting the orchestra. The second half of the concert will be a complete performance of *Tryst*, which lasts about 30 minutes.

## The Music



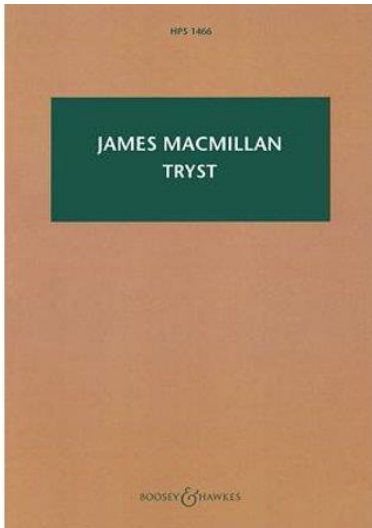
Sir James MacMillan (1959 - ) (Photo © Marc Marnie)

MacMillan was born in Kilwinning and brought up in Cumnock in Ayrshire. Like many children he started off playing the recorder but then moved onto the trumpet and cornet and played with his grandfather in colliery bands. He studied music at the University of Edinburgh under Kenneth Leighton and went on to specialise in composition at Durham University. One of MacMillan's first jobs was as Affiliate Composer of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He then shot to fame in 1990 when his orchestral piece *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* was premiered at the BBC Proms to great acclaim. Since then he has produced a substantial body of work including symphonies, operas, concertos and choral music and established a parallel career as a conductor. His percussion concerto *Veni, veni Emmanuel*, was premiered by Evelyn Glennie in 1992 and has since been performed around the world more than 500 times. In 2014, he established a music festival in his home town called the Cumnock Tryst which brings some of the world's greatest musicians to the area. MacMillan has always been keen to write for young musicians and amateur performers as well as creating works for soloists and orchestras all round the world and he has always been a vocal champion of music education and instrumental tuition for children. He is a keen football fan and once described the high point of his career as writing a piece for the unveiling of a statue of the founder of Celtic FC. He's never shied away from politics - he was once a member of Scotland's Junior Marxist League - and believes composers have a duty to be part of society and everyday life.

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He was awarded a Knighthood in 2015. His works are often described as a mix of sacred, religious music and traditional Scottish sounds. Both of these are evident within today's piece. Sir James will be conducting Masterworks this year and talking about his life and works from the stage.

## *Tryst* (1989)



*Tryst* is a one-movement piece for orchestra. It was written for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in and was given its premiere in Kirkwall, Orkney in 1989.

Over 25 minutes it moves seamlessly through many different moods and emotions as MacMillan draws on a love poem by Scottish poet William Soutar as his inspiration. The work breaks down into five sections, and whilst each section is very different to the last, all have a common idea at their core – contrasting ideas interrupting each other and ‘battling’ to take centre stage. The fast sections are exciting, challenging and complex. The slow sections are beautiful, peaceful and contemplative. The piece will be played in full and uninterrupted during our concert – it promises to be a thrilling ride!

*Tryst* is scored for the following instruments:

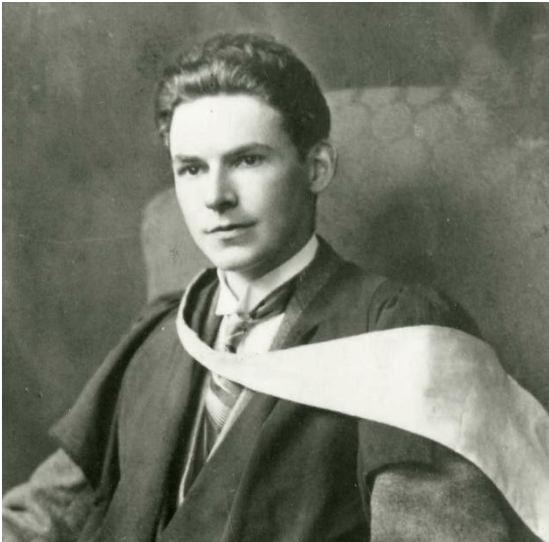
- 2 flutes, both doubling on the piccolo
- 2 oboes, both doubling on the cor anglais
- 2 clarinets, both doubling on the bass clarinet
- 2 bassoons, both doubling on the contrabassoon
- 2 horns
- 2 trumpets
- Timpani, also playing wind chimes and bell tree
- Strings (violins, violas, cellos and double basses)

A chamber orchestra like the SCO features many of the same instruments as a symphony orchestra but has fewer players and therefore fits into smaller spaces and makes less noise! Composers sometimes write pieces specifically for a chamber orchestra as, with fewer players, individual lines

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within the music can stand out more clearly. Singers and instrumental soloists are more easily heard when playing with a chamber orchestra as the sound balance is better. Orchestras only got really big in the 19th century so it's historically more accurate to play music written before then with a smaller group of musicians.

## William Soutar (1898-1943)



William Soutar (Photo courtesy of Perth and Kinross Libraries)

William Soutar was born in Perth and served in the Navy during the First World War, before taking a degree in English at Edinburgh University in 1923. He suffered from a progressive spinal disease which kept him at home and from 1930 he was confined to bed. He kept diaries, journals and dream books throughout his long illness and wrote poetry in both English and in Scots.

## The Tryst

The Tryst from 1932 describes a romantic encounter between two lovers during one, stolen night. Soutar is clearly escaping the pain in his own life by imagining something that would probably never happen to him again.

O luely, luely cam she in  
And luely she lay doun:  
I kent her be her caller lips  
And her breists sae sma' and roun'.  
A' thru the nicht we spak nae word  
Nor sinder'd bane frae bane:

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A' thru the nicht I heard her hert  
Gang soundin' wi' my ain.  
It was about the waukrife hour  
Whan cocks begin to craw:  
That she smool'd saftly thru the mirk  
Afore the day wud daw.

Sae luely, luely cam she in  
Sae luely was she gaen:  
And wi' her a' my simmer days  
Like they had never been.

## Glossary

luely - softly  
kent - knew  
caller - cool  
breists - breasts  
sinder'd - parted  
bane - bone  
gang - go  
waukrife - wakeful  
smool'd - slipped away  
mirk - dark;  
afore - before  
wud - would  
daw - dawn  
gaen - gone  
simmer - summer.

MacMillan set this poem to music in 1984 as *A Scots Song* in a traditional folk style and he used to perform it himself in the folk group Broadstone. We will hear it in this version during the concert played by string quintet. The tune haunted him in the following years and kept winding its way into other works. He used the tune in the Sanctus of his St Anne's Mass in 1985 and in 1988 developed the same material into *After the Tryst*, a miniature for violin and piano. He describes that piece as 'the original sketch for *Tryst*' which was written in 1989. Heavily developed and disguised, during the middle section in particular you can hear the original melody begin to emerge from within a beautiful texture – this is also the most tonal, traditional part of the piece.

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## TRYST – CREATIVE TASKS

The following tasks are designed to help your students understand James MacMillan's music from a hands-on perspective. These tasks will be the basis of your SCO player visit. If you are not receiving a visit, please adapt the tasks to suit the resources you have available

### Task 1: Rondo-esque (section one)

The opening section of *Tryst* is in rondo form.

**rondo** = a musical shape with one recurring 'theme' which alternates with contrasting 'episodes'

#### Theme:

The recurring 'theme' of MacMillan's rondo is made up of the following two ideas:

Idea 1: A rhythm played by the full orchestra



(James MacMillan writes this rhythm in the unusual time signature of 7/16)

Teach this rhythm and challenge your students, working in pairs, to invent a way to play it. Each team must choose two pitches that are a wide distant apart (i.e. a 5<sup>th</sup> apart or wider). Each player uses one of these pitches and alternates with the note immediately above or below.

For example:

- The pair choose C and G
- Player one plays C and C#
- Player two plays G and G#
- The rhythm becomes this:



Create a class version of this rhythm, everyone playing at exactly the same time.

Idea 2: A 'rumble' that grows from low pitches to high, from soft to loud

Ask each player to create a trill (fast wobble) using the pitches they selected above. Challenge the class to layer up these trills so that they move from lowest to highest and crescendo from *pp* to *ff*

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Join these two ideas together; the rhythm followed by the trill-crescendo. MacMillan's version of this is very short - less than 10 seconds. Challenge the class to make theirs as short and neat as possible.

## Motifs:

MacMillan's 'episodes' are made up of a handful of ideas. Split into three groups to make these as follows:

### GROUP 1: Ideas 1 & 2: Stabs and Fanfares

Create a cluster chord. The easiest way to do this is for everyone in the group to simply choose a note without discussion and see what happens. To be more authentic use stacked up 5ths and semitones like James MacMillan (or the notes you used above)

In *Tryst*, MacMillan uses number systems – i.e. the number of rests between ideas (or the number of repetitions) increase and decrease systematically not randomly.

Split into two sub-groups.

- Stabs = single chords sounded exactly together and rests
- Fanfares = repeated chords sounded exactly together and rests

Create a mathematical system that determines when you play. For example:

Stabs (single chords) happen after a number of rests or counts. This number decreases and increases systemically each time, i.e. stab, 5 rests, stab, 4 rests, stab, 3 rests etc



Create your own system for this.

Fanfares repeat and rest using a number system too, i.e. the chord repeats 4 times, 4 rests, 5 repeats, 5 counts of rest, 6 repeats, 6 counts of rest etc



Create your own system for this.

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Put the two ideas together. It should sound random but it's actually all carefully thought out. Discuss whether your counting should be at the same pace or not. The audience should not hear the counting or a pulse.

## GROUP 2: *Tryst* theme

Here is the beginning of MacMillan's original folk theme –



Learn this theme and adapt it two ways:

1. A 'wail' – choose one section, use high pitches, slow the tune right down and 'bend' to adjacent notes like this:



2. A hymn (smooth, slow, solemn) – choose one section, slow it right down, start on different notes and play in parallel:



## GROUP 3: Angry musical sentence

MacMillan was inspired by the poetry of William Soutar. Here is one of his verses:

### SUPPER POEM

Steepies for the barnie  
Sae moolie in the mou  
Parritch for a strappan lad  
To mak his beard grow

Stovies for a muckle-man  
To keep him stout and hale  
A noggin for the auld carl  
To gar him sleep weel

Bless the meat and bless the drink  
And the hand that steers the pat  
And be guid to beggar-bodies  
Whan they come to you yett





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- Angular tune (see above) – create an angular, jagged melody using William Soutar’s poetry as stimulus. This one can be quite short

Hear each theme back to back.

Split into teams again and work out a way to transform your tune to gradually take on the characteristics of the opposing tune.

For example – the smooth, slow, soft tune must gradually, over several repetitions become jagged, fast, loud, and vice versa. The longer tune will become shorter and the shorter one will lengthen. Perhaps challenge yourself to do this over a fix number of repetitions (i.e. four).

In MacMillan’s piece, themes often do ‘battle’. For example, section two begins with one long theme being interrupted by a shorter contrasting theme. As the interruptions continue, the shorter theme grows in importance and the longer theme recedes.

Can you alternate between themes to create the same effect? Your piece might look something like this:

- Long, smooth theme interrupted by short flash of angry melody
- Shorter less smooth theme interrupted by longer flash of angry melody
- Even shorter, even less smooth theme interrupted by even longer angry melody with some smooth moments
- Short flash of previously smooth theme seems to interrupt now long, smoother previously ‘angry’ melody.

## random or systematic?

You can do this ‘randomly’ with ideas simply interrupting each other, or systematically. In section five of *Tryst*, MacMillan shortens his main theme by two notes at each repetition until only one note is left.

## Task 3: Harmony and counterpoint (section three)

Teach everyone the beginning of MacMillan’s folk tune and create a version with harmony – in a very MacMillan way!

Split into two teams:

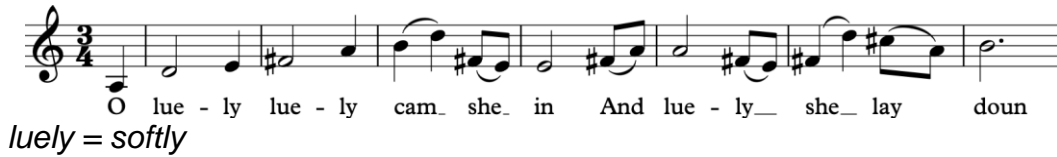
### Melody:

– everyone must play this theme at their own pace, ignoring those around them. Players may experiment with the follow techniques:

- stop and linger (for a long time) on any pitch
- get stuck
- return to the beginning
- improvise around the theme - slowly

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Here's the theme with William Soutar's words. This task will work well vocally –



O lue - ly lue - ly cam\_ she\_ in And lue - ly\_ she\_ lay doun  
*lue - ly = softly*

## Harmony:

- choose just three chords to harmonise with the tune above. The traditional harmony is below but you may choose something more adventurous....



Create a way to cycle through these chords so that they shift emphasis on each repetition. For example, you might –

- repeat them over 5 beats (or 7 or 10)
- keep changing how they repeat or their stress by stretching a different chord longer than the others
- simply play them without pulse on someone's signal

Unpitched/untuned instruments may add shimmering, magical sounds such as:

- Cymbal shimmers
- Random chiming bells/ glock notes
- Soft jingles from a tambourine

Aim to play with no audible sense of pulse or beat.

## Structure:

Put these two groups back together to make a magical, shimmering version of Sir James' tune. Pay particular attention to the dynamics (it should never become too loud), the tempo (slow) and the start and finish. Sir James begins and ends on the same pitch and this note (G) is often present within the texture as a pedal note or drone

## Task 4: single movement

If you have worked on all three tasks above, join them together to make a single movement. To do this, don't look towards James MacMillan's piece. Instead, listen to the sections you have created and fit them together in a way that works for you musically. Pay particular attention to the beginnings and endings of sections and how they might join/fuse/juxtapose.

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## CURRICULUM LINKS

Areas of the syllabus covered by this scheme of work –

### SCQF National 5 Music Course Code C850 75

*The course aims to enable candidates to:*

- *Broaden their knowledge and understanding of music and musical literacy by listening to music and identifying level-specific music concepts, signs and symbols*
- *Create original music using compositional methods*
- *Perform music*

*Candidates are required to:*

- *Explore and develop musical ideas using at least three of the elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre and structure*
- *Create one complete piece of music*

### SQA Higher Course Assessment Specification

#### SCQF Level 6 C850 76

*The course aims to enable candidates to:*

- *Broaden their knowledge and understanding of music and musical literacy by listening to music and identifying level-specific music concepts, signs and symbols*
- *Create original music using compositional methods*
- *Perform music*

*The following provides a broad overview of the subject skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the course:*

- *Skills in listening to music to promote aural perceptions and discrimination*
- *Knowledge and understanding of level-specific music styles, concepts, notation signs and symbols*
- *Self-reflection*

### SQA Advanced Higher Course Assessment Specification

#### SCQF Level 7 C750 77, C778 77

*Portfolio option:*

*Marks will be awarded for the following:*

- *developed and refined initial musical ideas*
- *creative and assured use of compositional methods*
- *selecting and applying music concepts in a sophisticated way, melody, harmony, rhythm, structure, timbre*
- *creating music that is original to the learner*

*Question paper:*

*Marks will be awarded for:*

- *an understanding of the concept content for the course*
- *the ability to identify and analyse the use of music concepts and styles in complex contexts*
- *knowledge and applied use of musical literacy*

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*Specific concepts (across all levels) relevant to this concert include –*

*Chorale*

*Chords I, IV, V*

*Stretto*

*Identifying chords and cadence points. Interrupted cadence*

*Time signature – (7/16, 5/16) – asymmetrical, unusual, irregular*

*Verse & Refrain/ chorus. Strophic*

*Atonal*

*Cluster*

*Homophonic*

*Homorhythmic*

*Contrapuntal*

*Coda*

*Scots Ballad*

*Rondo form*

*Orchestral instruments*

*Improvisation*

*Solo*

*Tones, semitones*

*Dynamics*

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## MACMILLAN'S OWN NOTES ON *TRYST*

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 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 (i.e. the two music's 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.

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## ONLINE LINKS

### **Performances of *Tryst***

Here's a performance of *Tryst* by the Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic, conducted by Edward Caswell

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQn\\_h48hL4o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQn_h48hL4o)

Another performance of *Tryst* by the Ulster Orchestra conducted by Takuo Yuasa

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AwVyB-hX\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AwVyB-hX_4)

### **Performance of *After the Tryst***

A performance of James MacMillan's *After the Tryst* by Nathalie Shaw (Violin) & Helene Tysman (Piano) in 2012

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3imCB3og6VE>

### **Performances of other pieces by James MacMillan**

A performance of James MacMillan's *Stabat Mater* in the Vatican

<http://genesisfoundation.org.uk/videos/vatican-premiere-of-sir-james-macmillans-stabat-mater-in-the-sistine-chapel/>

The SCO performs James MacMillan's *Veni, veni Emmanuel* at the BBC Proms in 1992

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FRQqc9\\_oSY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FRQqc9_oSY)

James MacMillan's *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* performed by the RTVE Orchestra in Madrid in 2015 (starts at 1.10)

<https://gloria.tv/video/RsTXeHPaZSgU2T1VvknjygVNn>

### **James MacMillan talks about his life and work**

James MacMillan reflects on the celebrations for his 60th birthday in 2019, the premiere of his Fifth Symphony at the Edinburgh International Festival and his idea of what an ideal listener would be like

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hq2GGUg-yc0>

James MacMillan talks about his religious faith and music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=169vLkK6VII>

James MacMillan suggests how to listen to new music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PURpU2fTf1I>

James Macmillan talks about his piece *The Confession of Isabel Gowdie*

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00bnyfg>

### **A new book by James MacMillan**

*A Scots Song: A Life of Music* Published by Birlinn Ltd, 2019.