

# Johann Nepomuk Hummel

The reputation and awareness of Hummel and his music continue to grow, with 2010 seeing the first-ever recording of one of his operas, 'Mathilde von Guise', full of glorious music. Two dramatic conclusions can now be deduced about Hummel. First, that his greatest genre was arguably as a choral and vocal composer rather than the piano, on which his historic reputation lies; second, that he ceased to be a full-time composer in 1813, when he married the singer Elisabeth Röckel (part of Beethoven's inner circle and the Elise of 'Für Elise'). Thereafter, Hummel's principal output, which includes his three most popular works (the A-minor and B-minor Piano Concertos and the Septet), was for his personal use as a virtuoso pianist.

The vast majority of musicians have never played any Hummel works. It is thanks to the specialist classical companies that the glories of his music can now be increasingly heard, although concert performances are rare – but growing.

For a composer to have been consigned to oblivion, as Hummel was until the 1959 re-discovery of his Trumpet Concerto, can seem strange, particularly when he was as popular and famous in his lifetime as his great rival, Beethoven. A book could be written on the subject, but going out of fashion as the Romantic age progressed is a main reason, plus the fact that his contemporaries, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, wrote so much great music (though we should not forget that even the 'Great Four' have had major revivals).

I believe that Hummel is the Fifth Man (after the Great Four) of the wonderful period for classical music centred in Vienna from 1770 to 1830. Piano concertos with slow movements that make people weep; ballet music of unsurpassed beauty for the time (still never performed in concert); choral music of exaltation and serenity.

Hummel continued the natural evolution of classical music from Mozart and Haydn through to Chopin, to whom he was a major mentor and whose music can surely only be fully understood in the context of Hummel's piano music, from which Chopin learnt so much.

In 1813 it seemed likely that Hummel, eight years younger than Beethoven, would continue on his trajectory to become one of the world's greatest composers. Instead he married and, in modern parlance, "got a life."

I now see the rivals, Hummel and Beethoven, as perhaps equally gifted, but as opposites in many ways, the products of their upbringing:

- Hummel was an only child from a happy family; Beethoven was one of many, from a highly dysfunctional family
- Hummel had a happy marriage and family; Beethoven had this only as a dream, and his family relationships (brothers, sisters-in-law, nephew) were a disaster.

- Hummel was financially very successful; Beethoven was not.
- Hummel sped through his compositions; Beethoven honed them to perfection – sometimes over years.
- Hummel composed to entertain; Beethoven composed for posterity.

The Hummel Project, an initiative to increase global awareness of Hummel's music, has made substantial progress in the last year, in spite of limited funds and scarcity of my time. The website [www.jnhummel.info](http://www.jnhummel.info) now provides free downloads of many of Hummel's scores and identifies sources of many more, and there are dozens of excerpts of Hummel's recorded music, as well as videos of concert performances from the Hummel Festival.

2010 has also seen the launch of the Hummel Ensemble, formed specifically to perform Hummel's chamber music (and fascinating arrangements) alongside that of his great contemporaries. In Andrew Brownell, Leader of the Ensemble, we have a unique international interpreter of Hummel's piano music.

Andrew is also Editor of the Hummel Project's ongoing publications of the previously unavailable full scores of the Piano Concertos of 1813, 1816 and 1819, an essential part of a dive for these great works to fill the large gap in the popular piano concerto repertoire from 1809 (Beethoven's 'Empire' concerto) to 1830 (the Chopin concertos).

The Second International Hummel Festival, attended by guests from many European countries and the United States, was held over 12 days in May 2010 and gave a number of 'first modern-day performances.' The Third Festival will be held from 21 to 27 May 2011, at Domaine du Faure, near St. Emilion, France (see [www.orpheusandbachus.com](http://www.orpheusandbachus.com)). Ian Christians

Ian Christians, the Director of the Orpheus & Bacchus Music Festival, leads the Hummel Project. The Hummel Ensemble performs at the LCMS concert on 20 February 2011.



The Hummel Ensemble

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## Members' Voices

### A Portrait of Mary Lincé



Mary Lincé and her husband Martin are without doubt the longest-standing members of the LCMS. Indeed, almost the entire history of the Sunday chamber-music concert series may be traced through her life.

It was in 1925 at the age of nine and living in Wembley that she first attended the South Place Sunday Concerts (the original forerunner of the LCMS concerts) at the old Unitarian chapel near Moorgate station. Admission was free, and the organisation relied, not always profitably, on the interval collection for funding. Seating was on long, hard, wooden pews (no falling asleep!), two of which are still to be seen in the foyer at Conway Hall.

As well as chamber-music enthusiasts, the relatively warm venue attracted many down-and-outs from the surrounding area, who were tolerated as long as they kept quiet.

In 1927, plans were afoot to build the Conway Hall, and the concerts moved temporarily to the Great Hall of the City of London School. Mary had become a pupil at the girls' school, and, with her free transport pass, was able to attend more frequently.

This hall was totally unsuited to chamber music. It had a high-vaulted ceiling and a cathedral-like resonance. Such heating as there was rose to the ceiling, often leaving a shivering audience below. Alfred Clements, the founding father and organiser of the concerts, appealed regularly for more money in the plate, but the audiences were so poor that the future of the concerts was seriously endangered. But they did survive, and moved to the purpose-built Conway Hall, where a sub-committee of the South Place Ethical Society was formed to organise the concerts.

The programmes were very long by today's standards. The first part usually consisted of an instrumental group, followed by songs, and then a solo item. After the 20-minute interval, there followed another solo performance, more songs, and a final piece by the instrumental group.

In 1938, Mary joined the organising committee. However, although some concerts took place in 1940, it was found impossible to continue as most of the committee members were away on war duty or evacuated from London.

The concerts successfully restarted in the autumn of 1945, this time with support from what is now the Arts Council. The format of the concerts was normally reduced to an average of three items, much as we know it today.

Mary was now married and living in Redcar, but this did not deter her from remaining on the organising committee, and when Mary and Martin returned to London in 1947, Martin also joined the committee. He did not miss a concert until their retirement in 2000, and he served as treasurer for 47 years. Mary herself only missed four or five concerts, when she took time off to have their two children.

Mary describes her parents as impecunious middle class with cultural ideals and a love of classical music. Her great regret is that she did not become a professional musician, but this required years of study and adequate family finances, which she did not have. She did appear in public in Mahler's second symphony with the Philharmonia Chorus. Martin taught at the Wandsworth Boys' School, whose choir had an extremely good reputation, performed with some of the best-known orchestras, and made a number of high-profile recordings.

Chamber music has remained the dominant factor throughout her life. During 50 years of active participation in the London chamber-music scene, she has been privileged to see and hear the cream of chamber performers, notably Dame Myra Hess in her legendary wartime concerts at the National Gallery and the original debut of the Amadeus String Quartet.

What about today? Mary is delighted with our move to Kings Place, and both she and Martin are season-ticket holders and rarely miss a concert. It is notable that in the same way that the Conway Hall was considered a state-of-the-art concert hall in 1927, Kings Place has a similar standing in 2010.

We discussed Mary's views on more recent features of concert going. Clapping between movements? Not in 'her day.' It breaks the spell and concentration. Wild applause, despite the standard of performance? Applause reflected approval, but audiences did not hesitate to show disapproval if justified.

It is said that a love of music leads to a long life, and Mary and Martin Lincé are living proof of this. We should all take note.

Leon Levy

## Members' Voices

### The Lure of Kings Place



Sue and I are chamber-music devotees. Until quite recently, the Wigmore Hall was the venue par excellence, with its marvellous acoustic, beautiful auditorium, great programming, and an extraordinarily attentive and aware audience. It is still, I must admit, our firm favourite because it feels so apt for the music that we most often listen to, ranging from Haydn and Mozart through Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and Chopin to Ravel, Debussy, Bartok and Shostakovich (a few of the mainstream composers to whom we most respond). Competing with it are Queen Elizabeth Hall (to which I have a deep antipathy, which I know others do not share) and St Luke's, which is especially attractive for lunch-time recitals, with daylight streaming through the big windows. Now, we also have Kings Place, which in just two years has become a central part of the London music scene.

Kings Place has its own distinctive character and qualities. The acoustic, whilst not as warm and embracing as Wigmore Hall's, is fine, with depth, clarity, and enough resonance to give body but not so much as to obscure detail. It's an exciting and involving sound. You really feel part of the performance. The sight lines are excellent—a clear gain here over Wigmore Hall—and it really doesn't matter where you sit in the hall. Most significantly, there is great contact between the players and the audience,

and the performers themselves seem to get pleasure from this and to enjoy performing. One feature has often been the willingness of the artists to introduce and comment on works from the platform, and we also like the usual informal performer dress code.

LCMS's move to Kings Place has been pure gain for us. We only occasionally went to Conway Hall, because for all the attractive clubby feeling, it was not a comfortable place. We would go despite rather than because of the venue. Not so with Kings Place, where the hall is a positive attraction. Now, we come quite often—not as often as LCMS's Hon. Treasurer would like, but often enough for it to be a frequent pleasure.

We appreciate the combination of well-known and up-and-coming artists and the range of concerts on offer. The policy of including new works, especially by British composers, is brave and doesn't deter us too often, although (being honest about this) we have difficulty in recalling such works that have made a strong impression. Perhaps the audience (including us) is inherently conservative, and comments we overhear in the interval suggest that new pieces may more often be tolerated than welcomed. However, composers struggle to be heard, and it's right that LCMS gives so many opportunities.

The new talent we hear suggests an excellent scouting system, and our only serious complaint is that whoever scheduled the Whan Quartet for the opening concert of the current season didn't take account of our holiday plans. Generally, though, LCMS enhances Kings Place and Kings Place enhances LCMS—it's a great combination, and one that we hope will flourish.

Richard Gold

## Visual Arts: Pangolin London



Photo: Steve Russell



Photo: Steve Russell

'Scylla,' Stainless steel & acrylic, William Pye

The regularly changing sculpture on display at Kings Place is, I hope you'll agree, one of the ingredients that puts Kings Place a head above other arts venues. The exhibition of sculpture at Kings Place was part of Peter Millican's incredible vision right from the outset, and through his close collaboration with Europe's largest sculpture foundry, Pangolin Editions in Gloucestershire, Pangolin London was born.

Thanks to the affiliation with the foundry and the fabulous location at the front of Kings Place, Pangolin London has established itself in the past two years as a reputable bastion of British and Contemporary sculpture in the capital. The gallery endeavours to offer a diverse exhibition schedule from a range of prestigious and emerging talent that often takes the process of making as a starting point.

The eclectic schedule for 2010 has included the ceramicist Jason Wason exploring the medium of bronze for the first time; carved stone animals and figures and their equally beautiful bronze translations by Michael Cooper; and most recently, the notorious photographer David Bailey's first foray into exhibiting his private collection of his sculpture. Looking forward to 2011, Pangolin London continues to focus on sculpture, and will include an exciting show looking at the theme of the couple in the work of renowned British sculptor Lynn Chadwick, as well as a show curated by notorious artist Marcus Harvey and an exhibition dedicated to highlighting contemporary female sculptors.



## Hidden Gems

Toccata Classics aims "to present recordings of outstanding music that is not otherwise available, without regard to the period of its composition or its provenance". Launched in 2005, the label has published almost 60 CDs, with over 30 more recordings already lined up.

Toccata is continuing to seek out hidden gems, and is eager to share them with other music lovers through the Toccata Discovery Club. Membership of the Discovery Club (£20 annual fee) brings with it two free Toccata Classics CDs (or a Toccata Press music book) on joining, with substantial savings on all subsequent recordings and books. With the holiday season upon us, the gift function on the Club's website could make gift-giving just that much easier this year: [www.toccataclassics.com/discoveryclub.php](http://www.toccataclassics.com/discoveryclub.php)

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# CHAMBER MUSIC NOTES

ISSUE 3 WINTER/SPRING 2011

# The LCMS Newsletter



Photo: Sarah Hamant

## Welcome!

This issue of *Chamber Music Notes* brings you a medley of elements that contribute to the success of the LCMS concert series: music, composers, musicians, members and partners.

Peter Fribbins highlights the upcoming concerts in the second half of our third season in Kings Place. Levon Chilingirian is interviewed about his life in music. James Francis Brown and Walter Rudeloff share their personal experiences of composing and commissioning James' String Quartet, premiered here in May 2010. Ian Christians promotes Johann Nepomuk Hummel, whose Piano

Quintet in D minor will be performed here in February 2011. Two LCMS members—Mary Lincé and Richard Gold—share their strong views on chamber music and venues. And Jenniifer Mitchell and Esther Ainsworth of the Kings Place Music Foundation and Polly Bielecka, director of Pangolin London, contribute from the Kings Place community of which we are a part.

Without doubt, the move to Kings Place has been successful artistically and organisationally, but we are not yet financially sustainable. We are identifying funding opportunities, but in order to progress, we need help from you, our members. Please sponsor a concert, make a donation, or help with fund-raising.

We are pleased to report that *The Strad*, a monthly classical music magazine about string instruments, is offering LCMS members a discount on subscriptions. Please contact our administrator, Karolina Ozadowicz, at [karolina@londonchambermusic.org.uk](mailto:karolina@londonchambermusic.org.uk) to get the member's code in order to take advantage of the discount.

As always, we would love to hear from you about any aspect of the LCMS. You can reach me by e-mailing Karolina or by catching me on a Sunday night. A new way to comment or make suggestions is via the LCMS Facebook page.

Neil Johnson

Executive Chairman

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## Behind the Notes

Our third season in Kings Place has got off to a great start, with some wonderful artists and interpretations of classics in the repertoire. The new year will bring visits by old friends Raphael Wallfisch and John York, the Rosamunde and Marmara trios, and the Allegri and Dante quartets, to name but a few.

The LCMS residency by the Turner Ensemble, a group comprising mostly principals from the Royal Opera House orchestra at Covent Garden, continues with three further concerts in 2011. The first features Messiaen's spiritual masterpiece 'Quartet for the End of Time', written whilst he was imprisoned during the Second World War, and Schubert's sublime Piano Trio in Bb.

In 2011 we present another residency, with the famous Allegri String Quartet, who on January 30th begin an exciting two-year project surveying the entire Beethoven quartets. Each concert will contrast two Beethoven quartets with a key work in the genre by Shostakovich. The opening concert features the early Op.14 quartet, arranged by Beethoven from his E major piano sonata in 1804; a mid-period Razumovsky work; and Shostakovich's first quartet, composed in the summer of 1938.

Our concert the following week is given by Charles Owen and Katya Apakishvira, and provides the excuse for something I have been keen to do for some time: utilise both of the Hall's lovely, new nine-foot Steinway pianos at the same time! Their concert will include Stravinsky's 'The Rite of Spring' and Ravel's 'La Valse', and should be a memorable occasion. I must confess I sometimes regress into little-boy mode, wondering what splendid things can be arranged aurally and visually on the wonderful Hall One stage. Minor victories in this context so far are the four harps of the Hall's opening festival in 2008; the Henschel Quartet and the Finchley Children's Choir last Christmas; Sir Nicholas Jackson's Concertante of London with the spectacle of his beautiful harpsichord; and the forces of the Orchestra of St John's with John Lubbock. Beware: I haven't finished yet in this private aesthetic mission!

Other highlights in the first half of 2011 include a wonderful string trio from Sweden performing Bach's 'Goldberg Variations' in the excellent Sitkovetsky arrangement; the Hummel Ensemble, dedicated to promoting the work of the famous 19th-century master; the fabulous Russian Virtuosi; a visit from the Kodály Quartet—Hungary's most famous string quartet; and return visits by the Badke Quartet and by Philippe Graffin, the latter joined by pianist Marisa Gupta and harpist Catherine Benyon in a fascinating programme of French music for violin, piano and harp.

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Peter Fribbins, Artistic Director

## Date for the diary:

**Peter Fribbins' Piano Concerto** will have its world premiere by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Robertas Servinikas, with Diana Brekalo (piano), on 9 April 2011 at the Cadogan Hall, which describes Peter as "well known for his dramatic and memorably melodic musical style."

## Leon Levy Visits Levon Chilingirian OBE

Born and bred in North London, I do not often venture south of the river (except for the South Bank Centre and National Theatre – and that's only just).

However, I recently took the plunge into deepest SE24 for what turned out to be a fascinating visit to the home of Levon Chilingirian, eminent violinist, founder of the famed string quartet, and amongst many other things, honorary president of LCMS. Here, I was welcomed with a strong dose of Armenian coffee and apple cake made from the produce of the garden.

Born to Armenian parents in Nicosia, Cyprus, Levon began playing the violin at the age of five, taught by his great uncle Vahan Bedelian. He came to England when he was 12, and studied at the Royal College of Music with Hugh Bean, and later with his uncle Manoug Parikian, one of the leading violinists of his time and leader of the Philharmonia Orchestra from 1949 to 1957.

Levon came from a musical family. His mother was a professional pianist, and his father, a full-time civil servant, was a fine singer. His paternal grandfather was the director of a church choir who introduced the organ into church services in 1904 and wrote a mass, still sung today.

The Chilingirian family had fled to Cyprus in 1921, and formed a close-knit Armenian community of 5,000 people based around Nicosia. Music was considered to be the best medicine after their earlier traumatic experiences, and a choir was soon formed. Levon was born into this community, and the music of Armenia was central to his upbringing.

In his teens, Levon did not consider becoming a professional musician, but was persuaded to sit the entrance exam of the Royal College of Music. He was offered a scholarship with the warning that he should only go ahead if he were prepared to play in the second violins of a provincial orchestra for the rest of his life. This was before A-levels, and he was faced with the decision to take up music professionally or choose a 'proper job'. All we know what happened.

Levon described a number of important influences in the development of the Quartet. These included receiving a surprise letter from Yehudi Menuhin, who was a great admirer, inviting them to play with his son Jeremy at the Gstaad festival in the 1980s. The important advice on style and performance they received proved to be invaluable.

The members of the Amadeus Quartet were also exceptionally generous with advice and encouragement, and Steven Isselis has become a close friend over the years and an important influence.

Levon's busy career has not allowed him much time in the field of orchestral music. He played in a symphony orchestra when a student, and has played the Brahms concerto, but these activities have been overshadowed by his great love of, and devotion to chamber music, which, as we all know, has led to the pre-eminence of the Chilingirians in this field.

I asked Levon about his heroes. First must come his anthropologist wife Susan, together with his son Stepan, his wonderful colleagues in the Quartet, and duo partner Clifford Benson. He also described two underrated composers—the Swedish Anders Eliasson and Armenian Tigran Mansourian—and the Hungarian cellist Miklos Perenyi, a great master of the European tradition.

On the other hand, he is critical of what he perceives as the modern trend of playing with too much vibrato and too fast.

Levon is a great fan of the LCMS. His first contact was as a student in the '60s, when he attended concerts at Conway Hall under the rule of George Hutchinson. There was always a great atmosphere, a good acoustic and degree of intimacy. But he is now an enthusiastic supporter of Kings Place, and feels that the contact with the audience is much enhanced, with more of a salon atmosphere.

Levon's latest adventure is taking place in Venezuela. The Quartet went there first in 2008 to play and teach, and were subsequently invited to head up a branch of El Sistema devoted to chamber music. Their first visit in this role was in January 2010, when they gave master classes to ten quartets from all regions of the country. The youngest players were 12 and the oldest—professional players and teachers—in their 30s. Levon is impressed by the outstanding characteristics of the young musicians, many of whom have been born into a life in the slums, and their intense energy and enthusiasm.

We could have gone on and on about Levon's fascinating life in music but for the space limitations of this newsletter. So I wended my way back to North London with the certain feeling that I had been in the company of an outstanding individual.

# Commissioning a String Quartet

Walter and Susan Rudeloff funded the LCMS commission of James Francis Brown's String Quartet, which was premiered by the Badke Quartet on 16 May 2010. *Chamber Music Notes* asked James and the Rudeloffs to describe their experience of the commissioning process. First, James answers Walter's questions; then Walter gives us his and Susan's perspective.

**Walter Rudeloff** *When did you first know that you were going to become a composer?*

**James Francis Brown** There was indeed a critical moment. I was finding my way around the piano and discovering new chords and such like, on a rather gloomy day, when one particular progression of harmony happened to coincide with a break in the clouds. In my suddenly sun-filled room, I attributed this event to my prowess as a composer! I take a rather more humble attitude these days.

**WR** *What have been the main influences on your music?*

**JFB** Inevitably, I suppose, my first musical enthusiasms would have reflected those of my parents. We frequently listened to Chopin and Beethoven during trips in the car. When I was about 12, I heard various works by Bartók and Stravinsky, and was appalled and fascinated (eventually besotted) at the same time. At this age, I gained a scholarship to study composition with Hans Heimerl (himself a pupil of Alban Berg), who, ironically for a native Viennese, introduced me to works by Vaughan Williams, Britten and Tippett, amongst many others. I felt another developmental jolt here but also a sense of kinship, as I had been working my way towards a similar musical language myself. I do sometimes wonder whether there is (to return to the sun-filled-room analogy) a climatic influence on composers, which accompanies their intellectual development. Character is so often formed by environment, and this may be the case with composers, too.

**WR** *Do you have favourite composers, types of music, particular "schools"?*

**JFB** My list of favourite composers and 'most influential' is very long. It also varies a great deal over time. Like a diet, there are occasions when I feel the need for different 'nutrients', and will find I'm listening obsessively to one particular composer. Then, with time, this settles into a more sober appreciation. I suppose I am marginally more drawn to the music of the first Viennese school and to mid-20th-century music, but this, too, varies. Regarding the vexed question of contemporary music, I would say that my development as a composer was founded on a fascination with tonality and melody and a search for novel modulations, etc. I don't set out to shock, but I do like to try to surprise, if at all possible, and I think this is a rather important aesthetic principle and perhaps a dividing point in artistic approaches.

**WR** *How do you begin a new composition, especially with commissioned works?*

**JFB** Commissions are always exciting but daunting things. There is the flattery of being 'needed' artistically—always a boost to the ego! There is the thrill of the opportunity to create – with legitimacy and not just self-indulgence! There is the money—which I doubt ever quite equates to the man-hours spent at work, but which is nonetheless welcome! The initial burst of excitement may result in a flurry of mental improvisations. I often envisage (or whatever the aural equivalent is) an actual, physical performance, complete with vigorous down-bows or well-timed pizzicato, for

instance. I am guilty of putting off the process of writing it down until the last possible moment because, with the first few marks on the manuscript paper, the really hard work begins.

**WR** *Do you see a definable course of development in your life work to date?*

**JFB** I always have the feeling that my best is still to come—and I hope that this will always be the case. There is the feeling of an untapped reservoir, which with a little more contemplation, I may be able to tap! Because of the practical issues surrounding performance, there is often a time-lag between the composer's mental development and their most recent utterances. An audience cannot be expected to guess what remains unwritten in the composer's head and that, consequently, the composer will have a very different self-perception to that gained by those who are familiar with his or her existing works. Personally, I feel the right to vary my idiom—that's to say, in terms of the degree of complexity in the music, according to mood, taste and circumstance. If one sincerely writes an 'approachable' work, which presents fewer 'difficulties' for the audience, one is often branded a conservative, in the pejorative sense, by critics. Conversely, composers who follow a personal quest to the limit may find themselves quickly alienated by audiences. This often leads a composer to adopt a position on one side or the other. I think this may be harmful for music as it can deny the fruitful complexity of instinct. What we need to say varies, and I feel strongly that the artist should be 'allowed' to pursue and express both states as they feel inclined. This has always been my own approach.

**WR** *What do you do for inspiration when musical ideas are not readily forthcoming? Do you have tried and tested extra-musical "tricks" that you can resort to?*

**JFB** The flip side of 'commission excitement' is a sense of responsibility to the performers, the audience, and one's own development and self-esteem. This is where inhibition can strike. With experience, this sort of inhibition diminishes—one thinks, 'well, I've got through this before and I can do so again'. But inhibition is as unpredictable as inspiration. I have gradually cultivated a somewhat blurred approach to composition. After some meticulous planning, I try to let go of preconceptions and allow the music to take its own course. I frequently find that I have written the end of a movement before the beginning, and that a work is conceived as a series of 'islands,' which gradually coalesce into a 'land mass'. This approach helps to avoid the 'what next' problem—to some extent!

**WR** *Is there anything you wish to say about the composition of this quartet: ideas, influences, form, shape, etc.?*

**JFB** I must confess here to having intended to write about my String Quartet before the premiere. Unfortunately, the composition got in the way! I would like to remark, after the event, on the thrill of a premiere from the composer's point of view. It is usually nerve-wracking. However much confidence one might have in the performers and however much one knows how it should sound, there is always something unexpected and peculiar about the first performance. In this case, I hasten to add, I was delighted by the interpretation of the Badke Quartet and by the response of the audience. These are the moments when the hard work and the dreams become a reality, and there is the precious sense of having communicated something. It can be a moment of great satisfaction, rarely of self-congratulation but almost a feeling of being intensely 'alive'.

*James Francis Brown is currently writing a work for the cellist Steven Isselis and soprano Lucy Crowe. For more information about him and his work, see [www.jamesfrancisbrown.com](http://www.jamesfrancisbrown.com)*



## Present at the Creation of a New 'Being'

The idea of commissioning a work of music first came to Susan and me a short time after LCMS moved to Kings Place. We noticed that Peter Fribbins was scheduling contemporary music that had been composed recently by younger British musicians. Although we had made a donation at the start of the new season at Kings Place, we wanted to do something more lasting (hopefully), and decided that a new piece of music would be a fitting contribution.

When we approached Peter Fribbins with the idea, he was eager to assist us, and asked what sort of piece we had in mind. As string quartets were a favourite of ours and the form most often heard at Conway Hall, we decided that the commission would be for a string quartet, with the accent on an 'English' sound or quality to the music. A short time later, Peter came back with suggestions.

Peter said that he knew the ideal composer for this commission, an acquaintance who had previously worked in chamber music with a decidedly 'English' element. Although he had never tackled a string quartet, this composer was quite interested in our project. A week later we were introduced to James Francis Brown at an LCMS concert.

During our initial meeting, we talked a bit about our idea, and James told us a bit about himself and the type and style of music he was composing. We were surprised to learn that amongst other commissions, he had reconstructed

including a String Trio and the Trio Concertante. Both pieces are typical of James' music: quite energetic openings followed by more lyrical, even pastoral passages, with more lively, sometimes strident music following on.

Later, James mentioned that his Piano Quartet of 2004 was going to be performed at the Ulverston Music Festival (where he was Composer in Residence in 2009) in June. As Susan's family live near there, we arranged to attend. Similar to our quartet, the Piano Quartet is a single-movement work comprising sections: a sonata-like opening with an extended coda. We met James at the Festival, and he talked about the piece. There is nothing like hearing direct from the composer the ideas he has and then hearing and understanding the piece. It was quite thrilling to be shown a recently written score and then hear it performed.

After the sensation of the Festival, things went quiet for a while, as James began the composition. It was several months later that we received an invitation to attend a performance of his tone poem for full orchestra, Prospero's Isle, at St. John's Church, Waterloo, played by the Sinfonia Tamesa. We liked the piece, and discussed the string quartet briefly when James mentioned that the ideas were beginning to fall into place.

Spring of 2010, and we had not heard much from James. Apparently, he had more than one deadline to meet, and was keeping his nose to the compositional grindstone. In fact, it was rather difficult communicating with James, but then his task was the more important as LCMS had already booked the Badke Quartet for the final concert of the 2009-10 season to include the premiere of the String Quartet.

Finally, in April James resurfaced and announced he had finished the work. We were sent an e-version of the score, which we had a look at. Even better, we received another email: 'Would we like to hear the "dress rehearsal", to be given privately somewhere in Blackheath?' Of course, we deared the diary for that day, and as James was driving there from North London that day and able to collect us, I had the pleasure of riding with the composer and talking to him about the composition.

The 'dress rehearsal' was a first for us: sort of like being present at the creation of a new 'being.' As we were the only ones in the room, it really was a private performance. After the run-through, James made a couple of suggestions on phrasing and discussed a few technical points with the Badke, who were all very amenable to his suggestions. We were quite prepared that we might not like the piece or parts of it, but were delighted that we both liked it and wanted to hear it again.

The public performance was a success, and we now await its second performance with impatience.

*Should you feel inspired to follow Walter and Susan's example, Peter Fribbins, our Artistic Director, will be delighted to discuss it with you!*

and arranged a performing version of an early project by Richard Wagner, which was subsequently performed at the Linbury Studio of the Royal Opera House.

To give us a better idea of his style, James sent us a CD recording of some of his music,

## Getting to Know You

Our continuing series of pen-portraits introduces you to two more members of the LCMS/Kings Place community.

**Jennifer Mitchell**  
Managing Director, KPMF



Jennifer joined Kings Place Music Foundation as Operations Director in 2007. The building was still under construction, and it was crucial that it be finished to the highest standard in time for its opening in October 2008, thus posing a number of challenges. Jen was also required to recruit a

dynamic team that would be able to run the venue effectively. In December 2008 Peter Millican asked Jen to become the Managing Director of KPMF.

Only two years since its opening, Kings Place is becoming one of London's leading arts venues—a hotbed of musical talent. Jen has a real passion for music and relishes the opportunity to work within such a creative environment. No two days are the same, and this makes the role incredibly interesting and varied. Jen says that working with curators such as the LCMS trustees is a pleasure, and the team regularly meet to discuss how the music projects are progressing and seeing where improvements can be made. Feedback is very important to KPMF and is always welcome. Jen feels that the regular LCMS series adds a real homely feel to the week's programming, bringing with it a loyal following of recognisable faces that enjoy listening to a fantastic musical programme.

**Esther Ainsworth**  
Duty Manager



Esther works as a Duty Manager at Kings Place and joined for the opening of the venue in 2008. She manages a wide range of events and often will be leading the amazing Front of House team on LCMS Sundays! Her role is to manage each event and co-ordinate between the

Stage Manager, Front of House and Technical crew, making sure that everything is perfect on the night. Outside of work, Esther is a practising Fine Artist, specialising in sound and interactive media, and has exhibited in various UK locations, as well as in France and New York.