

Northern Chords Festival Ensemble Comes to London

Jonathan Bloxham, Artistic Director and Founder of the Northern Chords Festival, comes, as I do, from the North East, and he still keeps in close contact with the region. Born in Gateshead, he left to attend the Yehudi Menuhin School, afterwards studying music at the Royal College of Music and at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Louise Hopkins.

As a cellist he has won several prestigious awards, such as the Guilhermina Suggia Gift and a Pierre Fournier Award Grant, and has played widely in international concert halls – in Japan, New Zealand and Europe, including Kings Place.

I met him in London, a rushed lunch break in a full day of rehearsals. He was in between Tokyo, Hong Kong and New York, and it seems that conducting has, at the moment, taken over his heart and soul. He is cover conductor of the New York Philharmonic, and has been recently appointed assistant conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. He feels his training and career as a cellist give him a lot of insight into the relationship between a conductor and the orchestra. He sees the job of a conductor to be that of an ‘enabler’, who pulls together a collective vision of the music. A conductor, he said, is never alone but is in a solitary place.

The Northern Chords Festival consists of a regular core of players, augmented each year by musical friends and colleagues, some from overseas, some from connections with the National Youth Orchestra. They meet up annually to play together at the Sage Gateshead concert hall but also at less obvious venues such as warehouses and clubs, where he hopes to attract new audiences. He is, he says, an ‘inner-city boy’ playing for his home audience. He is, too, passionate about contemporary music, and has commissioned works, including a piece for soloist and chamber orchestra by Matthew Kanet.

Not surprisingly one of my first questions was how he balanced so many varied aspects of such a demanding career. He is based in London and Birmingham with a lot of travelling abroad. He enjoys being busy!

Part of his pleasure in playing in the LCMS concert in February is that he can play his cello in chamber music with his very good friends, Benjamin Baker (violin) and Daniel Lehardt (piano), with Eivind Holtsmark Ringstad playing viola. He has chosen two well-known romantic works from the chamber repertoire with the contrasting voice of the Janáček. There are also the changing interest and sounds of the programme progressing through two, three, then four instruments together.

Altogether an exciting concert to look forward to.*

Pat Kremer

*The Northern Chords Festival Ensemble LCMS concert takes place on 4 February 2018.

‘We Can Play Quietly’: Onyx Brass

LCMS was delighted to welcome Onyx Brass to play in our 2017/18 season on 29 October, and I am grateful to the group, especially their wonderful trombonist, Amos Miller,* for providing some background information on the Ensemble and their music.

The original members of the Ensemble met in the National Youth Orchestra, but of course ‘youth’ doesn’t last for ever, and as age crept up on them they quickly became (e)x-NYO, an anagram of Onyx. (As a crossworder I found this a very pleasing explanation of their name.) Onyx is also of course a burnished, semi-precious stone, which reflects the Ensemble’s glorious tone!

The members of the group, which comprises two trumpets and a horn, a trombone and a tuba, were drawn to the beauty of the sound that a brass instrument can produce, allied to the excitement of its power – but, as the group suggests: “Rest assured, in the words of Spider-Man’s uncle, ‘with great power comes great responsibility!’”

Three players come from the brass-band tradition, and two from a more orchestral background. As a quintet they have played in a huge variety of locations, from Kings Place, Wigmore Hall and the Purcell Room, to a hotel lounge in Lockerbie and the Thames Clipper, and their overseas performances have included the USA, Canada, Sweden, Germany, France, Poland, Portugal, Nigeria, Borneo and Bermuda.



The Sacconi Quartet Opens the LCMS 2017-18 Season

LCMS is delighted that the Sacconi Quartet presented the opening concert of our 2017-18 season on 8 October. The now well-known Sacconi Quartet was formed in 2001, while its members were students at the Royal College of Music – and 16 years on it is the only quartet of their generation to maintain its original line-up.

Over these 16 years they have performed in almost every major festival in the UK and many of the great concert halls of Europe, most recently the spectacular Rudolfinum in Prague for the Prague Spring Festival. They have recorded six CDs of their own, as well as appearing on various other CDs alongside other musicians and composers. The most recent of these features three chamber works by Jonathan Dove, including his incredible song cycle ‘In Damascus,’ commissioned by the Quartet and Mark Padmore. The CD was chosen by Gramophone magazine as Recording of the Month in August.

November 2017 saw two new releases: chamber music by John McCabe on NMC (featuring the composer at the piano in his haunting quintet ‘The Woman by the Sea’); and the complete string quartets – so far! – of British minimalist, Graham Fitkin, on Signum. The Fitkin CD was launched at Kings Place on 7 December (featuring Graham Fitkin on piano and the Sacconis).

It wasn’t long after the Sacconis started in 2001 that they were introduced to the Wihan Quartet, who introduced them to the music of Janáček, Suk, Smetana and Dvořák, and coached them on this repertoire, among other pieces. They were thrilled to be invited to perform with them this year in the Prague Spring Festival to an audience of 1,000, playing the mighty Octet by Enescu as well as octets by Mendelssohn and Shostakovich. (This programme was repeated in Nottingham on 2 November and Wimbledon on 12 November.)

2017 also saw the 10th Sacconi Chamber Music Festival in Folkestone. To celebrate they played a bumper weekend of concerts featuring pianist Alasdair Beatson, bassist Leon Bosch and harpist Lavinia Meijer. The festival is now a firmly established part of the cultural calendar in east Kent, and attracts audiences from across the country.

For their concert for LCMS at Kings Place the Sacconi Quartet played Jonathan Dove’s stunning quartet ‘Out of Time’ (CDs available for sale in the foyer), and either side of the Dove, two of the all-time Viennese quartet classics: Mozart’s glorious first from his set dedicated to Haydn; and Schubert’s turbulent and evocative ‘Death and the Maiden.’ Before the concert, the Sacconi’s viola player, Robin Ashwell, said: “We are looking forward to returning to LCMS at Kings Place immensely. We love playing all three of these works, and we are looking forward to playing them for you on 8 October!”

Chris Bradshaw



Photo: Emile Bailey

Friends’ Voices Evviva la LCMS!



My wife Karen and I were raised in New York, but not long after our marriage in 1958 we lived and worked in different places in the US -- I, first as a mining engineer, then as an Information Technology manager. However, I had already followed a parallel career path, which led me to many different destinations,

including the LCMS.

I grew up with music. My parents were avid music lovers. I began attending live performances as soon as I was able to sit still in the concert hall. We had subscriptions to Toscanini’s NBC Symphony Sunday concerts in the famous Studio 8H, as well as to the NY Philharmonic on Thursdays and the Philadelphia Orchestra on Tuesdays, both in Carnegie Hall. A great deal of unforgettable music by the likes of Heifetz, Horowitz, Rubinstein, Piatigorski, etc.

I started piano lessons at the age of four. When I was eight and my school offered instruments (and free lessons!) to pupils who wanted to play in the band or orchestra, I volunteered and was handed a clarinet (a metal one, now a rarity). I took to it right away, and soon started private lessons. A year later I got my first wood clarinet, and dropped the piano because I was having so much fun playing the clarinet in the two school ensembles.

I began playing professionally when I was 14, in theatres, opera pits and dance bands (a sacrilegious activity, according to most of my music teachers). I also

became more and more interested in jazz, and became a reasonably competent saxophone player, in order to go on the road with several different ‘big bands’ in the last years of the ‘Swing Era’. At the same time, I was an active chamber music player in a professional woodwind quintet, and I began the formal study of theory and harmony.

At 18, I chose to attend a regular university course, which would lead to a reliable way of earning a living, rather than the conservatory, which also enabled me to stay in New York, where I had fairly regular gigs playing both jazz and classical music. So I was a ‘crossover artist’ before the term came into common usage. Twelve years later, Karen and I wanted to try living in Europe. She had a degree in art history, specializing in Roman Baroque, and was also trained as a graphic artist. I took a one-year sabbatical, and we moved, lock, stock and barrel, to Rome, along with our two sons, then 10 and seven, and our 13-year-old basset hound.

After the first year we wanted to stay for at least “a few more years”. I had made some good friends in the Italian musical world, and was playing regularly in Italian jazz clubs and festivals, but if we were going to stay, I needed to find a ‘real’ job. Luckily, just as we were on the verge of returning to the US with our tails between our legs, I received an offer from a new IT company, and not quite five years later I and several others from the firm started our own company. Karen was also a partner, in a graphic arts studio located near the Trevi Fountain.

By the early 1980s, our sons were attending universities in the US, and Karen and I moved to Milano, since most of my work was in the North of Italy, and I continued to perform in jazz clubs in Milano and Torino. In 1991, in preparation for retirement we moved to our ‘vacation home’ in Switzerland. As city folk, however, we weren’t ready for full-time country living, so we purchased a small flat in Central London to spend three

months a year enjoying the fabulous (and perhaps unique) cultural life that London offers.

During the first year in London, I noticed that the Chilingirian Quartet was playing at a venue named Conway Hall under the auspices of an organization called the London Chamber Music Society. We attended, and got hooked on the LCMS right on the spot. We loved everything about it – the quality of the music, the low prices, the very special ambience and the people we met. We took out two memberships straightaway, and despite being in London only a quarter of each year, we are still enthusiastic members more than 25 years later. We love the comfort and the excellent acoustics of Kings Place, although we do miss the eclectic charm and especially the historical cachet of Conway Hall. We also greatly appreciate the gradual change in artistic approach that has taken place during Peter Fribbins’ tenure. His innovative and creative programming represents, in our opinion, a very positive trend and should be continued. In any case, *Evviva la LCMS!*

Retirement allowed me to resume regular practicing, and to link up with a string quartet and two different trios of clarinet, cello and piano. Our occasional public performances are not 100% perfect, but are nevertheless at a good journeyman professional level. Most important, we really have a great deal of fun doing it! Last but not least, I am still an active ‘crossover’ musician, and have appeared on 17 jazz CDs in the past 15 years.

Since 2016 we live full time in Switzerland. However, we keep up our LCMS memberships because we believe in the ideas that motivate the Society and wish to continue our support. We make regular trips to London for cultural odysseys, and we always include as many LCMS concerts as possible.

Stephen Klatsky

and his letters became more full of bravado and insults. Indeed, they were often lewd in tone, using a surprisingly filthy vocabulary – the play ‘Amadeus’ didn’t exaggerate this aspect of Wolfgang one iota.

Suchet’s book leaves the reader with bittersweet feelings of sadness for the upbringing of a genius, admiration for the creativity and stamina of a young man, and perhaps a little streak of pity for his parents, who tried too hard while hoping to secure a financially happy household.



Brendel’s Fantasy

by Gunther Freitag. Haus Publishing.

Another (entirely different) book I read recently is ‘Brendel’s Fantasy,’ a novel translated from the German, which I really enjoyed.

A retired businessman, Holler, is diagnosed with a brain tumour and goes to live in Tuscany, leaving his wife to get on with her life at home. The novel follows his imaginative idea of getting Alfred Brendel to come and play Schubert’s ‘Wanderer’ Fantasy for him. This starts out being something of a fantasy, but slowly Holler gets it together and remarkably organises workers in the village to prepare a suitable concert hall.

We feel the tensions between a businessman, presumably used to a certain amount of efficiency, and village workers who are much more lackadaisical and often prefer just to sit in the village bar. Adroit descriptions and characterisation bring the Tuscan village scenes to life, in contrast to the thoughtful and intellectual Holler, nearing the end of his life with one single-minded ambition – the brilliant concert of Alfred Brendel performing Schubert.

Holler’s difficulties, successes, infuriated moods and cunning ploys to achieve his aim carry us along to the end.

Chris Bradshaw

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CHAMBER MUSIC NOTES

The LCMS Magazine

ISSUE 13 2017/2018

Welcome!



We were delighted to have the marvellous Sacconi Quartet open our 2017/2018 season with Mozart, Schubert, and Jonathan Dove’s stunning quartet ‘Out of Time’.

‘Time’ is in fact very much a focus at Kings Place during 2018 with the ‘Time Unwrapped’ series. One of the reasons for the ‘Time’ theme is that 2018 marks 10 years since Kings Place opened, a brave venture for them – and for the London Chamber Music Society, as we orchestrated the complex move from Conway Hall, after 79 years of concerts. LCMS contributions to ‘Time Unwrapped’ will include the Chiaroscuro Quartet, with a wonderful programme of Bach, Beethoven and Schubert on 29 April.

In the Friends’ Voices column of this issue of *Chamber Music Notes*, Stephen Klatsky, a longtime LCMS member, compares and contrasts the Conway Hall concerts with those at Kings Place, concluding: *Evviva la LCMS!* Along the way he also tells a fascinating story of his own musical journey.

LCMS never rests on its laurels of course. New ventures in 2018 include an ‘Up Close’ series in Hall Two. These concerts will provide our audiences the opportunity to enjoy a more intimate event than in Hall One, more akin to a 19th-century salon experience.

In 2018 we also begin an exciting cycle of the complete Mozart String Quintets, to be given by the Chilingirian Quartet with the addition of violist Prunella Pacey, a series that will take us into 2019. In this issue, ‘Leon Levy Meets’ Susie Mészáros, the Chilingirian’s regular viola player par excellence.

Looking ahead to 2019 and beyond, LCMS Artistic Director Peter Fribbins reflects in his ‘Behind the Notes’ article on the possible consequences of Brexit for art organisations such as the LCMS, including the great loss if new post-Brexit conditions and protocols were to result in a diminished platform for European musicians.

In LCMS concerts this season alone, we welcome European musicians such as the flautist Eleonore Pameijer from the Netherlands, soprano Karin Dahlberg from Sweden, and Quartetto Adorno from Italy, as well as various individual European musicians who perform as regular members in other well-known ensembles we host.

Of course, we have terrific talent in the UK. This issue brings you articles about some of these fabulous musicians performing for us this season: the Sacconi Quartet, Onyx Brass, the Northern Chords Festival Ensemble, and Jess Gillam and Anthony Hewitt. Jess Gillam, for example, responds here to the question: ‘Why the sax?’ (she loves the ‘versatility and dynamism’ of the instrument, which ‘can convey so many different emotions, just as the voice can’). In her 18 March concert you can hear her dynamic response to that question in music.

Welcome to the LCMS 2017/18 Season!

Jane Sufian Editor



Photo: Tom Barnes

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Books

‘Mozart: The Man Revealed’

by John Suchet. Elliott & Thompson Limited.

A well-known name often leads to half-remembered and inaccurate facts, and in this vein I tackled ‘Mozart: The Man Revealed’ thinking I would know it all. But not only was Mozart’s life more complicated than I had imagined or remembered but also the stories and reminiscences in this book are backed up by a huge quantity of letters from both Wolfgang and his father. I had not realised quite how much of a treasure storehouse these were.

I am all for e-readers and their convenience, but give yourself a treat and use the ‘real book’ in this case. It has a beautiful layout, a very clear font and outstanding illustrations, which have short and informative labelling. A few asterisks are used, but these are clarified at the foot of the page, not inconveniently hidden at the back of the book.

Illustrations include contemporary portraits, cityscapes, buildings, interiors, maps and manuscripts, all contributing to the feel of Mozart’s 18th century.

Whereas Leopold, obnoxious and arrogant, infuriated almost everybody, Wolfgang was a charmer, even if rather earthily vulgar. As a young child he seems to have obediently and good-humouredly gone along with his father’s demands, playing his extensive repertoire with élan and including his party piece of playing the piano with his hands covered. Leopold, a prodigious letter writer, was constantly perturbed about money, concert bookings and reactions from the nobility to his precocious little family, but even as a child Wolfgang was writing funny and light-hearted postscripts to his father’s letters home.

It’s impressive to be reminded of the extensive travels the Mozarts undertook: first, father, son and daughter; then with reluctant mother; later, son alone. Travel by boat or carriage in hot or freezing conditions, over many miles, was very debilitating and inevitably ended with severe tiredness, sickness, fever or frostbite. Suchet may have described the life of one family in the 18th century, but we also get an overview of general life at the time. There are aspects of social history such as this, also the search for patronage, and church sponsorship, that are very well covered in the book, though I did wonder how the number of letters, written in such quantity – sometimes almost daily – ever got delivered.

Wolfgang travelled variously between Salzburg, Vienna, Passau, London, Paris, Mannheim, Milan et al., and in each city we get a flavour of the influence of the nobility, the church dignitaries and changing fashions in entertainment. Leopold was very put out when Wolfgang got ‘paid’ with, e.g., a gold watch rather than real money: in fact, he acquired quite a collection of trinkets, which disappointingly did not pay for food or rent. There was a constant search for cheap accommodation and bargain travel.

After some chapters dealing with Wolfgang the child, later ones cover his defiance of his father and his teenage infatuations. He seemed to be just searching for a friend, but meanwhile he was furiously writing letters home, in between surges of creativity – there was no moping around! There was a slow alienation from his father and mother,



Behind the Notes: On 'Time'

'For though we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ryde, Ay fleeth the tyme; it nyl no man abyde.' Chaucer, 'The Canterbury Tales'

I'm delighted that our 2017/18 Season seems to have started well. My mind is now very much on 2018/19 and the first half of 2019/20, since LCMS artistic planning typically casts about 18 months ahead. One of the things particularly concerning arts organisations at the moment, inevitably, is where things might end up in 2019 or 2020 post-Brexit: it would be a great loss if organisations such as the LCMS had to diminish their platform for European musicians. Of course we have terrific talent in the UK, but we need to be able to continue to

Jess Gillam: Why the Sax?



Photo: Kaupo Kikkas

versatility and dynamism of the saxophone. It can convey so many different emotions, just as the voice can; one minute you can be making a hugely powerful, aggressive sound and the next you can be floating the sound and singing out a beautiful, delicate melody.

WR Do you have a musical background?

JG My dad was a drummer in a successful indie-rock band when he was younger, and my family are extremely supportive and encouraging of my

experience British ensembles and artists as part of an international musical landscape: it is the ability to offer such perspective that underpins London's importance as a rich centre for culture.

We know how the Wihan Quartet brings something special to the music of their fellow Czech countrymen Dvořák and Suk; how particular the sound of the Berlin Kammerensemble was in our series last year; how Ravel sounds and feels in the hands of a violinist like Philippe Graffin. In LCMS concerts this season, as well as international artists such as the fabulous Fine Arts Quartet from the US, we welcome the flautist Eleonore Pameijer from the Netherlands, soprano Karin Dahlberg from Sweden, and Quartetto Adorno from Italy, as well as various individual European musicians who perform as regular members in other well-known ensembles we host.

Like me, I am sure you value the access we have in London to such a wonderful international range of artists. I am confident we will be able to continue to enjoy their talents after 2019, since such cultural internationalism has been one of the hallmarks of London for centuries, from the Restoration of Charles II in the 1660s and arguably before then; with predominantly Italian musicians in the 17th and 18th centuries; and Germans and Bohemians in the 19th.

But at the same time, I'm concerned about the conditions and protocols that may begin to be imposed. Will artists require permits, or need to purchase some type of temporary visa? What if they bring some CDs to sell at the concert? Regulations that might have the effect of curtailing or diminishing concert activities would be a shame; the problem is that even small amounts of additional bureaucracy or payments will cause UK arts organisations real difficulties. Whilst things may be challenging for trade and business, arts organisations in particular survive on a knife-edge of sustainability. In such a context, our government needs to tread very carefully indeed. Let's see....

On a less cautious note, I am delighted that we will be starting our 'Up Close' series this Season

in Hall Two. As well as providing our audiences the opportunity to enjoy a more intimate event, more akin to a 19th-century salon experience, we may also be able to experiment with the seating, for instance sitting 'in the round' with musicians in the middle. I'm looking forward to these concerts in particular, and would be pleased to hear your thoughts and feedback following our pilot events.

Another feature this year is our collaborative events in Kings Place's 'Time Unwrapped' festival throughout 2018. One of the reasons for the 'Time' theme is that 2018 marks 10 years since Kings Place opened, a brave venture in the King's Cross regeneration zone of the mid-noughties, when there was little infrastructure yet in place on the wind-swept, forgotten land north east of St Pancras station; and equally as courageous for the LCMS, as we orchestrated the complex move from Conway Hall, after 79 years of concerts!

Amongst the various LCMS contributions to 'Time Unwrapped', we welcome back the Chiaroscuro Quartet with a wonderful programme of Bach, Beethoven and Schubert on 29 April. We also host the Brodsky Quartet on 18 November 2018, with a fascinating programme exploring the theme of war – a theme that will no doubt be very much on all our minds next autumn with the centenary of the First World War Armistice. In between, on 13 May, we begin an exciting cycle of the complete Mozart String Quintets, to be given by the Chilingirian Quartet with the violist Prunella Pacey, a series that will take us into 2019.

And on the subject of 2019 more generally, I am enjoying working with Kings Place staff Rosie Chapman and Helen Wallace on LCMS collaborations for 2019's 'Unwrapped' festival. I would like very much to share some of these early ideas and plans – regrettably I am sworn to secrecy! Watch this space....

Dr Peter Fribbins
LCMS Artistic Director

Appreciations of Ian Christians

Chris Bradshaw:

It was sad news to hear that Ian Christians died in September. He was a familiar and jovial figure at many LCMS concerts and was often spotted at many of the major London music venues. He fostered up-and-coming musicians as well as new young talent, which I feel privileged to have heard. Some LCMS friends will have known him through his annual music festival, Orpheus & Bacchus, at Gensac, near Bordeaux, where Ian happily combined two of his great interests, music and wine.

LCMS Artistic Director, Peter Fribbins, remembers "his immense passion for music. He was a great friend to LCMS, generously sponsoring several of our concerts in recent years, including a programme featuring his beloved Hummel and a concert with the Cambridge University Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Sir Roger Norrington. His friendship and enthusiasm will be sorely missed."

Walter Solomon, a former LCMS Secretary, recalls "a larger than life character who created the most wonderful environment in which to hear chamber music at his home in Gensac." When Walter was looking for a quiet place to live and write, it was Ian who found him the perfect spot at Petit Montet. He also remembers "going to a Leonard Cohen concert with Ian in Amsterdam" and "watching Neil Diamond together on his large screen as Ian sang along to 'Hell Yeah' – that was how he lived!"

Apart from his support of LCMS he also became very involved with the music scene at his old college, Clare, Cambridge. I always admired his nurturing of young musical talent, giving many young musicians the opportunities and experience so vital in the run-up to a musical career. At Orpheus & Bacchus we heard improvisation, ensemble work and solo performances, and when

he brought the CUCO orchestra to Kings Place they gave LCMS a wonderful musical evening. Ian was always full of ideas. He was a man of many interests and passions. Our deep condolences go to his wife, Sharon, who supported all his endeavours – scatter-brained as many of them might have been!

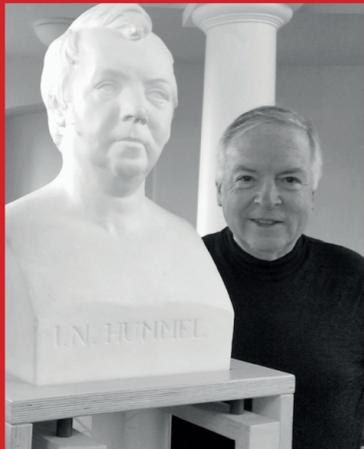
David Barker:

I met Ian in 1999 at the very first Orpheus & Bacchus festival, at which Freddy Kempf gave four piano recitals on consecutive evenings. This was launched the concept of a musical house party, which Ian and Sharon developed into a festival of excellence.

Within a few years, Ian bought a run-down property at Gensac, which he refurbished and expanded to become O & B's permanent home, and which quite a few LCMS members visited and enjoyed. Recognising that visiting pianists would require a good instrument, Ian bought a Steinway Grand from Alfred Brendel, and much later, rather as a curiosity, a very rare Pleyel Duo-Clave, as enthralling to pianists as to audiences.

During the past 18 years, I became a close friend of Ian's, and had the pleasure of discussing artists and repertoire that might respond to the O & B format. So wedded to O & B did I become that I attended no fewer than 32 festivals in all. The fact that these have now ceased is a great sadness to me.

When Madeleine and I married in 2004, we went to an O & B festival for our honeymoon, which may show a misplaced sense of priorities, but I don't think so. Thereafter, Ian always provided us with the best room (designated the Barker room) on which we had first claim whenever we attended. O & B became almost like a second home.



A huge number of musicians, many now famous, are O & B alumni. As well as Freddy, the pianists include Anthony Hewitt, Louis Lortie, Stephen Hough, Boris Gilburg, Yevgeny Sudbin, Andrew Brownell and Ben Frith. The violinists Sasha Sitkovetsky and Yuri Zhislin, and ensembles such as the Gould Piano Trio, the Frith Piano Quartet, the Chilingirian Quartet and the Wihan Quartet are all remembered (and thanked) for their major contributions.

A final thought. As a direct result of our O & B experiences, Madeleine and I developed friendships with many musicians. Without Ian's creative inspiration this would never have happened. For us, that will be his enduring personal legacy.

that take inspiration from folk, jazz, minimalist and baroque music. The programme incorporates beautiful, ethereal and atmospheric repertoire such as Ravel's 'Pièce en forme de habanera' and the second movement of Marcello's Oboe Concerto in D Minor, as well as some high-energy, characterful pieces such as 'The Celtic' by Dave Heath.

WR Given that we are a chamber music society, which pieces do you think will appeal most to our audience?

JG I think the Marcello Oboe Concerto works fantastically on soprano saxophone: baroque music works particularly well on soprano. 'Escapades' by John Williams (from the film 'Catch Me If You Can') is a work in three movements – 'Closing In', 'Reflections' and 'Joy Ride'. The third movement is exhilarating to contrast with the sheer beauty of the second movement.

WR Which other classical composers have written for the saxophone? Any surprises amongst them?

JG Glazunov has written a concerto for saxophone, as have Villa-Lobos, Ibert, Dubois and Richard Rodney-Bennett.

WR How did you first get involved musically with Anthony Hewett? Do you two work together in forming the programme?

JG Anthony is the artistic director of the Ulverston International Music Festival, and it was at the Festival that I first met him. He has always been very supportive, and has provided me with opportunities such as giving me a platform to perform and arranging for me to meet artists performing at the Festival and for me to make guest appearances with them. In 2015, I became the Young Ambassador for the Festival. Anthony and I are both from Ulverston, so it is fantastic for us to play together!

WR What other instruments do you play? Does any other instrument influence you?

Leon Levy Meets Susie Mészáros

Susie Mészáros is the violist of the Chilingirian Quartet, who will perform the first of their three LCMS concerts surveying the six Mozart String Quintets on 13 May 2018.

To interview Susie Mészáros, the good friend of the LCMS and viola player par excellence, I did not this time boldly go to the wilds of South London. Instead Vivien and I had the pleasure of receiving her in our home, where she arrived fresh from a number of engagements in London (she now lives in Manchester).

In 1956 the wave of arrivals from Hungary included her Hungarian father and her Italian mother. Born in 1960, she did not come from an especially musical background although her father was an accomplished choral singer, who was encouraged to think about a career in music but finally plumped for philosophy.

Her early memories are of a house filled with music – records of Kathleen Ferrier and of David Oistrakh playing the Beethoven sonatas. She started playing the violin at eight, and successfully auditioned for the Yehudi Menuhin School at the age of 10.

Her spell at the Menuhin School was a defining experience due not only to the teaching but also to the ambience and its contribution to her all-round education. She was a finalist in the string section of the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition and a Royal Over-Seas League gold medalist. She switched to the viola at age 16, making her Wigmore Hall debut the following year with Yehudi Menuhin himself. She became principal viola of the Camerata Salzburg at 18.

Back in the UK, she launched her career in chamber music via the Villiers Piano Quintet and the Fitzwilliam Quartet, with an interlude back to the violin as concertmaster with the Kent Opera Orchestra, where she met Iván Fischer, who went on to become the great conductor we know now with the Budapest Festival Orchestra.

In 1990 came a change in career. Now a mother, Susie decided to give up music, studied for a degree in fine art, and became an artist for five years. But this was not to last, and in 2001 Stephen Isserlis introduced her to Levon Chilingirian. There was an immediate rapport, and Susie became the well-known and much-loved violist of the Chilingirian String Quartet as we know her today.

She continues her teaching activities as professor at the Royal College of Music and the Royal Northern College of Music and is a regular visitor to the Purcell School.

We discussed the role of competitions and the enormous stress these inflict upon young musicians. Susie felt they were a necessary evil and essential to reaching the top in a career in music. She criticised them for overemphasising

clean, foolproof playing rather than encouraging individuality.

She leads an extremely busy life but does find time for activities outside music, including cooking, walking her dogs and sailing with her film-producer husband Kevin, who has a racing boat on a lake near where they live.

Pet likes and dislikes are always interesting. Susie's dislikes include fussiness in concert etiquette, and outside music, the lack of freedom of speech as exemplified by 'safe spaces' and too much emphasis on political correctness. I suspect that most chamber music audiences would agree with this. She is passionate about integrity in all aspects of life and taking risks to uphold principles and the truth. In the musical field, she expressed a keen preference for British audiences.

I asked her about her heroes, and back came the swift reply "Beethoven and Menuhin" – not bad choices.

She is not optimistic about the current musical scene, especially for youngsters. It is becoming harder and harder to make a career in music, and there are fewer opportunities with many talented musicians vying for them.

As well as Kings Place and Milton Court, she has a particular fondness for St. John's Smith Square, which she describes as having a sweetness much appreciated by chamber musicians.

Being primarily a chamber musician, she has little personal knowledge of conductors but enjoyed playing with Iván Fischer and Sir John Eliot Gardiner during a short period as leader of the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique.

This was a relaxed and cordial interview. Susie is a warm and giving individual. The future of chamber music may be getting more challenging, but with artists like Susie and her colleagues in the Chilingirian, the chamber music scene will continue to thrive for years to come. The LCMS and our audiences can certainly count themselves lucky to have such dedicated and talented friends.



Getting to Know You

Introducing members of the LCMS/Kings Place Music Foundation community.



Helen Wallace
Creative Consultant, KPMP

Helen has been working for Kings Place since it opened its doors in 2008. At the time she was still Consultant Editor of *BBC Music Magazine* and was asked to come in and help set up the brochures and publications, write the website copy and commission the programme notes, having previously edited magazines for the Southbank Centre and the Royal Opera House. She began to contribute more to the programme, and in 2017 was asked to curate *Cello Unwrapped*, and then *Time Unwrapped*, along with the programming team and resident artist Hugo Ticciati. She is currently working on 2019's *Unwrapped*, as well as the broader musical offering at Kings Place, and collaborates closely with Peter Fribbins, Artistic Director of the LCMS. She also continues to devise the brochures and communications for Kings Place, making podcasts and scripting films.

Helen, a cellist and journalist by training, began her career as editor of *The Strad* magazine in 1990, and went on to *BBC Music Magazine*, which she edited from 1997-2004. She is also author of two books, 'Boosey & Hawkes, the publishing story', and 'Spirit of the Orchestra, a history of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment'. She was a critic on The Times, and currently writes for the Financial Times, the Artsdesk, and *BBC Music Magazine* among others, and broadcasts on BBC Radio 3.

Helen taught cello earlier in her life, and after having two children she trained in Kodály early-years music and has taught local classes for the last 15 years in her South London neighbourhood. She enjoys the hands-on immediacy of making music with young children and never ceases to be inspired by their enthusiasm, natural aptitude, creativity and memory skills.



Elsie Woollard
Box Office Assistant, KPMP

Elsie started working at the Kings Place Box Office in September 2016. She previously worked on the Box Office at the Royal Albert Hall whilst she completed her Bachelor's and Master's degrees on the Oboe at the Royal College of Music. Elsie only took up

the oboe when she was 15, after her grandfather, Hugh Maguire, encouraged her to play Bach cantatas with him. She fell in love with it, and went on to win The Evelyn Rothwell Oboe Prize (RCM) and perform in master classes with Stefan Schilli and Jacques Tys (Paris conservatoire). She also successfully auditioned for the ENO Evolve scheme and the Philharmonia Sit by projects. Outside of college Elsie played in numerous student- and graduate-led orchestras. Whilst still studying for her undergraduate degree, Elsie was invited to perform with both the Royal Opera House orchestra in their production of 'Un ballo in maschera' and the Orchestra of the English National Opera's 'La Traviata'.

Since leaving the RCM her professional work has grown: she has played with the London Mozart Players, English National Opera again, and she is now a regular 'dep' in 'Phantom of the Opera' at Her Majesty's Theatre. She is also on the extra lists with the Manchester Camerata and the BBC Concert Orchestra. Elsie is passionate about outreach and education work and has been invited to run and co-run workshops for the BBC Proms, Teenage Cancer Trust, RCM Sparks and many other organisations, including Songbird in Mumbai. Alongside music, Elsie is studying British Sign Language, with the hope to qualify as an opera and musical interpreter alongside her playing work. She loves to bake wedding cakes and knit.

Elsie enjoys working at Kings Place: she finds the variety of events really interesting and likes meeting colleagues and customers who are excited by the concerts we have here.