

CMV PRESENTS

# NEW **MUSIC** IN THE SOUTH WEST

Fiona Robinson's *Soundscape IV*



**Rhiannon John** - flute  
**Luis Ingels** - clarinet  
**Angharad Redman** - violin  
**Eleanor Jones** - cello  
**Manos Charalabopoulos** - piano

COLSTON HALL, SUNDAY 19TH MAY 2013

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Performing:

*Cusp* - **Graham Fitkin**  
*Le Lorient* - **Olivier Messiaen**  
*Valedictions* - **John Pickard**  
*Surface Tension* - **Howard Skempton**  
*Invocation-Meditation-Allegro* - **Michael Ellison**  
*Melayang* - **Marzelan Salleh**  
*Largo* - **Charles Ives**  
*Y'n Gwav* - **Julian Leeks**  
*Inertia* - **Kostis Tsioulakis**  
*Danza de los animales* - **Manos Charalabopoulos**

## *Cusp*

**Graham Fitkin**

This piece was commissioned by Andrew Roberts and composed in January 1997. It was written specifically for the first national clarinet competition - *The Trophee de Paris*. I wanted the character of this piece to be a precarious one, continually on edge and not giving predictable paths through to the end. The title refers to this. **GF**

## *Le Lorient*

**Olivier Messiaen**

Olivier Messiaen was a lover of nature, the freshness of the outdoors. His lifelong passion for recording and replicating birdsong is evidenced in his *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, a collection of thirteen pieces. Messiaen humanizes and treats birds like characters in a play and for each of these pieces he chooses another bird to become its protagonist. The second in the collection is 'Le Lorient' ('The Golden Oriole'); in a day's cycle starting just before dawn we experience the freshness of the dawn-chorus birds' callings, the colours of the chords of sunrise and of the rainbow, noontime, and eventually the piece comes full circle ending with the dawn-chorus of the following day, thus suggesting the eternal cycle of life. **MC**

## *Valedictions*

**John Pickard**

This work was composed during the winter of 1999-2000 for the cellist Helen Thatcher, to whom it is dedicated in friendship and admiration.

The title refers to two poems by the metaphysical poet John Donne, both concerned with aspects of parting and farewell. I originally wanted to set them for voice, but this never seemed to work and instead

the settings developed into two instrumental paraphrases, which follow the original texts in a very free way.

The first, "A Valediction of Weeping" centres on the idea of parting lovers each carrying the image of the other reflected in their tears. The second, "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" is about one of the lovers going on a journey. Here the image of a map and a pair of dividers illustrates the idea of one pointer remaining fixed but leaning towards the other pointer as it moves on its circular journey.

The work, which is lyrical throughout, is generally suffused with a feeling of farewell and loss, not least reflecting the period of its composition – on the cusp of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. **JP**

### ***Surface Tension***

**Howard Skempton**

*Surface Tension* was composed in June 1975, when I was working in music publishing and finding new friends beyond the confines of experimental music. One of these was the composer, Douglas Young, who commissioned several works for his group, "Dreamtiger". A notable feature of *Surface Tension* is the chromatically shifting piano part. **HS**

### ***Invocation-Meditation-Allegro***

**Michael Ellison**

Invocation-Meditation-Allegro was commissioned by flautist Helen Bledsoe, who premiered it in 1996 at Gaudeamus Week in Amsterdam. The work bridges East and West, specifically makam-based Turkish ney music, with inflections from my own musical language. Although I had not yet been to Turkey, I was studying and performing makam and sufi music intensively at the time. Through the use of certain extended techniques, sounds of the western flute are deconstructed to produce multiphonics, whisper tones, harmonic sweeps, just-intonation sounds, and, in the third movement, most of the above while singing through the instrument. The Meditation movement begins simply and European, travels through Japan (with evocations of Shakuhachi-type sounds) on its way to a climactic arrival in Turkey, the makam-influenced 'quasi-Ney cadenza' that forms the expressive center of the work. Working closely with the flautist, use of the aforesaid techniques allowed us to create a kind of 'super ney' spanning over three octaves. The concluding Allegro is a kind of romp, with the extended tonal bebop third-tone inflections of the theme alternating dramatically with a multiphonic-based second idea, which alternate dramatically until the final climax. **ME**

### ***Melayang***

**Marzelan Salleh**

This composition reflects the proverb, "An idle mind is a devil's workshop", similarly with the Malay belief that people who have nothing worthwhile to think about, will usually think of something bad to do. In the Malay language, '*Melayang*' means flying away. Sometimes, '*Melayang*' also gives the expression of a deviated soul. In the beginning, this piece uses a lot of non-chromatic open voicings, portraying a melancholic feeling with subtle gestures. However, in the middle section and towards the end of the piece, these soft gestures are interrupted by harsh accents along with tritone intervals, picturing an evil force finally taking over an innocent soul. **MS**

### ***Largo***

**Charles Ives**

*Largo* was originally written, around 1901, as part of an early violin sonata and later arranged for Violin, Clarinet and Piano. Precisely when this took place is a matter of some conjecture, with estimates ranging from 1907 to 1934. Its first documented performance was not until 10th May 1951. It is thought to have taken inspiration from hymn tunes, but Ives transforms the material in such a way as to render them virtually unrecognisable.

### ***Y'n Gwaw***

**Julian Leeks**

A depiction of Trevaunance Cove in St Agnes, Cornwall on a damp and misty winter day. I have not tried to represent the scene in any literal way, but rather to evoke the eerie, almost otherworldly atmosphere of these familiar yet strange surroundings.

### ***Inertia***

**Kostis Tsioulakis**

Sometimes the logic of the transposing instruments makes us realise how subjective tonality (in its strict sense) is. In this study I am exploring different ways of illustrating this subjectivity, like a surreal trip through each instrument's point of view. To achieve this, I am using clarinet in B $\flat$ , as if it were not a transposing instrument: every idea the violin introduces, will then be expanded by the clarinet one tone lower, which is what we would hear if clarinet was "reading" the violin's score in C. That way, the idea of *Inertia: a tendency to remain unchanged in our existing state, unless that state is changed by an external force* is introduced. In the first half, this *external force* is illustrated by the violin, struggling to draw the clarinet a tone higher. After the clarinet's cadenza, the instruments swap roles; now the clarinet attempts to lure the violin into playing a tone lower. The piece consists of 4 short parts, resulting in the starting idea transposed a tone lower. **KT**

### ***Danza de los animales***

**Manos Charalabopoulos**

*Danza de los animales* is a virtuosic piece for solo piano, that evokes the playfulness and groovyness of animals. The piece begins with a dance. At first it is shy and cheeky but as night falls the dance gets wilder. A moment of calm interrupts the action as the animals reflect upon the beauty of their own and their surrounding nature; the calm of the night under the summer starts. The music of the fiesta brings them back to their senses and the dance returns wilder again bringing the piece to an ecstatic finish.

**MC**

## **Composer biographies**

### **Graham Fitkin**

Graham Fitkin has worked with orchestras such as RLPO, Halle, BBC Symphony, Tokyo Symphony and London Chamber Orchestra. He has composed for dance companies such as Shobana Jeyasingh, Wayne McGregor's Random Dance, New York City Ballet and San Francisco Ballet. He has collaborated with ensembles such as Fibonacci, Smith Quartet, Piano Circus, and Ensemble Bash. He has recently worked with Yo-Yo Ma, visual artist John Keys and Royal Ballet choreographer Jonathan Watkins. Graham's work has been released on CD by Decca's Argo label, Factory, Sanctuary's Black Box and others.

### **Olivier Messiaen**

Messiaen was one of the major figures in 20th century music. His distinctive musical style was the result of a diverse range of interests and influences, including church modes, ancient Indian music, bird-song and his experience of synaesthesia, which led him to perceive certain harmonic combinations as colours. An abiding concern of Messiaen's music was to mould these disparate elements into expressions of the truth of his Catholic faith.

### **John Pickard**

John Pickard studied with William Mathias and with Louis Andriessen and is now Professor of Composition at Bristol University, where he has worked for 20 years. He has composed four symphonies, five string quartets, concertos for piano and for trombone and over 40 other works in many genres. The most recent disc of his orchestral music (*Sea-Change*; Piano Concerto and *Tenebrae*), issued by BIS records in March this year, has already received critical acclaim, with International Record Review (May 2013) describing it as 'outstanding' and BBC Music Magazine (June 2013), in a 5-star review, declaring the release 'an absolute triumph'. John is currently writing a new orchestral piece commissioned by the Nagoya Philharmonic in Japan for performance in May 2014.

### **Howard Skempton**

Howard Skempton began composing in the late 60s and studied privately with Cornelius Cardew. In 1969, Skempton and Cardew were founder members of the Scratch Orchestra. This was, to an extent, a philosophical construct as much as a musical one: membership was open to all, graphic scores were often used in place of traditional notation and improvisation played an important role.

Major works include *Lento* (commissioned by the BBC Symphony Orchestra) and his string quartet *Tendrils*, which was awarded the “best chamber-scale composition” prize by the Royal Philharmonic Society. His music has been released by Sony Classical and Mode Records.

### **Michael Ellison**

The music of Michael Ellison defies categorization, seamlessly integrating contemporary and classical sensibilities with traditional influences into a unique and personal idiom. Described as “beautifully crafted, robust and absorbing” by American Record Guide, Ellison’s is a music of colour and contrast, evocative atmosphere and emotional breadth. Having worked out of the collision of cultures that is Istanbul for over ten years, Ellison’s recent work explores the integration of disparate traditions and sonic experimentations into meaningful new forms.

Notable commissions and awards have included the opera *Say I Am You-Mevlana* (2012), co-produced by Rotterdam Operadagen and IKSU and the Istanbul Music Festival, the ‘Turkish’ Concerto K. 219, for Turkish instruments, cello and orchestra (2008) commissioned and premiered by the BBC Symphony Orchestra with conductor Pascal Rophé, Kubla Khan (2011) for the 2011 Istanbul Music Festival with Hezarfen Ensemble, from the Nova Chamber Music Series (2013-14) and Fry Street Quartet, Copland House (2006), New York Youth Symphony (1995), National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the Beebe Foundation (New England Conservatory), the Ojai Festival, the Barlow Endowment, ASCAP and University of Bristol (Rising Star Award, 2012). Co-Director of Istanbul’s groundbreaking Hezarfen Ensemble, Ellison teaches composition at the University of Bristol.

### **Marzelan Salleh**

Marzelan Salleh was born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He started learning music at St. John Institution, Kuala Lumpur and pursued a Diploma in Music and a Degree in Music Composition at ‘*Universiti Teknologi MARA*’ in Malaysia with Yoesbar Djaelani. He studied for an MA in Music Composition at the University of Salford with Alan Williams, and currently is learning composition at the University of Bristol with Michael Ellison. Marzelan’s main influences are Gamelan music, Malay traditional music, classical music, jazz and rock.

### **Charles Ives**

An American composer of rare invention and daring. His music, most of which was composed in the two decades prior to his suffering a heart attack in 1918, is filled with experiment and originality. His use of polytonality, atonality, multiple metres, quotation and quarter tones prefigured many of the developments that would become the staples of European experimental music. His wide ranging output included orchestral music, choral music, chamber music and over 150 songs.

### **Julian Leeks**

Julian began his musical life as a singer and self-taught guitarist playing with various bands, before turning to a more formal study of music in his twenties. He subsequently studied with Anthony Powers at Cardiff University and is currently writing up his PhD in composition at Bristol University, under the supervision of John Pickard. He also teaches classical and electric guitar.

His compositions bear witness to his diverse musical interests, which range from medieval liturgical music, through to the contemporary avant-garde and “world music”.

### **Kostis Tsioulakis**

After studying in Athens, for a degree in History & Archaeology, Kostis started a masters degree in Film Scoring at the University of Bristol. Currently, he is a PhD candidate in Acoustic Composition, under the supervision of Neal Farwell, exploring the functions of mediterranean/balkan polyrhythmic structures on large and small western ensembles. In parallel with his studies, Kostis is working as a film composer, currently writing for a new feature film which will be released this summer in London theatres.

### **Manos Charalabopoulos**

Manos Charalabopoulos is a versatile musician, whose breadth of musical achievement encompasses performing, composing and directing. As a performer he has appeared often as piano recitalist, concerto soloist, chamber musician and harpsichordist, in venues across the UK (Bridgewater Hall, Conway Hall, Bath Pump Room, Holywell Music Room) as well as in his native Greece (Historic Greek Parliament, American College of Greece). He was awarded the first and overall prize in the Panhellenic Competition 'Filon' and in the 2009 EPTA UK Competition, as well as second prize in the International Evangelia Tjjarri Competition. In March 2011 he was the musical director of a production of 'Sweeney Todd' at Pembroke College, Oxford, where he graduated with a BA in Music in 2012. Studying for a master's degree at the University of Bristol he is presently dedicated to developing as a composer. During the past year he has produced many works, including various commissions and some theatre music for a production of Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'. He looks forward to further commissions (string quartet for the American College of Greece String Quartet and an orchestral piece for the Athens Youth Symphony Orchestra), as well as a large orchestral composition based on Palamas' 'Twelve Lays of the Gypsy' for his final portfolio.



The **CMV Concert Series** was founded in 2011 by Bristol University students **Arthur Keegan-Bole** and **David Fay**, with the aim of providing student composers with the opportunity of having their music performed to the highest standards. Under their stewardship, CMV has gone from strength to strength and has grown into a flourishing annual concert series. Arthur and David curated the first three concerts in this year's series, and will continue to develop CMV in the coming years.

### **NEW MUSIC IN THE SOUTH WEST**

**New Music in the South West** is a project currently being developed by **Julian Leeks**. Part concert series, part educational programme, NMSW aims to raise the profile of contemporary music among the region's young people. The project will run over the coming year, with concerts in November and February and will culminate in a composition competition for A'Level music students and a major concert being staged in summer 2014, in partnership with **Bristol Zoo** and the **Bristol Ensemble**.

With the kind support of

