

SATURDAY 15TH NOVEMBER | 7:00 PM
DR JOHN GALLAGHER CONCERT CHAMBER



NIAMH BENTLEY

SOLO RECITAL

WITH NICK FLETCHER, PIANO



Programme

PIANIST - NICK FLETCHER

Oratorio: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' - *Messiah* - G.F. Handel

Song Cycle: 'Cinq melodies' - M. Ravel

I: 'Le réveil de la mariée

II 'Là- bas l'église'

III: 'Quel galant m'est comparable'

IV: 'Chanson des cueilleuses

V: Tout gai

Song collection: Rachmaninoff

I: Vocalise Op.34 no 14

II: Krysolov (The pied piper) Op.38 no 4

III: Zdes' horošo Op 21 no7

Duetto: 'Sull'aria' -*Le nozze di Figaro* - W. A. Mozart (KW)

INTERVAL

Aria: 'Oh! Quante volte' - *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* - V. Bellini

Song collection: *Hermit Songs* - Samuel Barber

I: The Heavenly Banquet -Op. 29 no 4

II: The Crucifixion -Op. 29 - no 5

III: Sea-Snatch -Op. 29 no 6

Lieder: 'Ein Schwan' - *Op.25 no 2* - E. Grieg

Aria: 'Be Kind and courteous' - *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - B. Britten

Niamh Bentley, soprano

Niamh Bentley is a 24-year-old soprano from Hawke's Bay. Her journey with opera and classical singing began in 2016 when she joined youth opera initiative, Project Prima Volta, which sparked her passion for opera. Niamh is a graduate of the University of Waikato Conservatorium of Music, where she gained her Bachelor of Music and recently, her Master of Music under the mentorship of Kristin Darragh and Francis Cowan. Early in her career, she made notable debuts, including the role of 'Flora Bervoix' in Festival Opera NZ's production of *La Traviata* and the 'Queen of the Night' in *Die Zauberflöte* by Mozart. In 2019, she portrayed 'Olympia' in The University of Waikato's *The Tales of Hoffmann*, and in 2022, she took on the role of 'Lauretta' in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* at the University of Waikato Conservatorium of Music. Niamh has also been the primary set painter for operas such as *La Traviata*, *Die Zauberflöte* and *Roméo et Juliette*.

Niamh attended the New Zealand Opera School in 2023 and 2024. In 2024, she was awarded the Merle Higgie Award for Most Potential. Niamh is currently a resident artist with Te Pae Kōkako TANZOS, under the tutelage of Nikki Li Hartliep.



Nick Fletcher, piano

The British Pianist and Conductor Nick Fletcher is the Deputy Head of Music for the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and was educated at the University of Edinburgh, Royal Academy of Music and the National Opera Studio. He has worked as a freelance répétiteur with multiple UK opera companies, including Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, Opera North and English National Opera. From 2016-2018 he was a member of the Jette Parker Artists programme at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, making his main stage debut conducting the Orchestra of Opera North in the 2018 Jette Parker Summer Show. After his time on the programme ended he immediately returned to the Royal Opera to work on the 2018 Ring cycle with Sir Antonio Pappano, who he subsequently assisted on the Royal Opera's 2024 Japan tour.

From 2018-2025 he was a member of music staff at the Royal Danish Opera in Copenhagen where, alongside his regular duties he conducted over 35 performances for the company, including a Danish tour of *Così fan Tutte* with the Aalborg Symphony, and in Copenhagen conducting performances of, amongst others *Kat'a Kabanova*, *Simon Boccanegra* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*. He also conducted the Danish National Orchestra in the first week of rehearsals for their concert performance of *Parsifal* with Adam Fischer.



Programme Notes

Oratorio: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' - *Messiah* - G. F. Handel (1685-1759)

Händel's aria "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth" uses words from the Old Testament Book of Job and appears in the third part of his oratorio, *Messiah*. The soprano voice expresses the believer's faith in the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ. Händel shows this meaning in the music, especially in the line from 1 Corinthians 15:20, "For now is Christ risen from the dead," where the rising and falling notes help illustrate the idea of resurrection.

Song cycle: *Cinq melodies populaires grecques* - M. Ravel (1875-1937)

In preparation for a lecture on Greek and Armenian folklore, Greek-born musicologist Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi provided a selection of Greek folk song texts to present. Calvocoressi quickly arranged for singer Louise Thomasset to perform with pianist and accompanist Maurice Ravel. They chose five folk songs—four from Pericles Matsa's *Chansons* (Constantinople, 1883) and a fifth, "Les cueilleuses de lentisques," from Hubert Pernot's collection *Chansons populaires de l'île de Chio*. Ravel composed the piano accompaniments in just thirty-six hours, and the lecture-demonstration took place that February at the Sorbonne. Together, Ravel's settings capture a sense of love, purity, and joy.

I: Chanson de la mariée

Réveille-toi, réveille-toi, perdrix mignonne,
Ouvre au matin tes ailes.
Trois grains de beauté,
mon cœur en est brûlé!

Vois le ruban d'or que je t'apporte,
Pour le nouer autour de tes cheveux.
Si tu veux, ma belle, viens nous marier!
Dans nos deux familles, tous sont alliés!

II: La-bàs léglise

Là-bas, vers l'église,
Vers l'église Ayio Sidéro, L'église,
ô Vierge sainte,
L'église Ayio Costanndino,
Se sont réunis,
Rassemblés en nombre infini,
Du monde, ô Vierge sainte,
Du monde tous les plus braves!

III: Quel Galant m'est comparable

Quel galant m'est comparable,
D'entre ceux qu'on voit passer?
Dis, dame Vassiliki?

Vois, pendus à ma ceinture,
pistolets et sabre aigu...
Et c'est toi que j'aime!

IV: Chanson des cueilleuses lentisques

Ô joie de mon âme,
Joie de mon cœur,
Trésor qui m'est si cher ;
Joie de l'âme et du cœur,
Toi que j'aime ardemment,
Tu es plus beau qu'un ange.
Ô lorsque tu parais,
Ange si doux
Devant nos yeux,
Comme un bel ange blond,
Sous le clair soleil,
Hélas ! tous nos pauvres cœurs soupirent!

Song to the Bride

Awake, awake, my darling partridge,
Open to the morning your wings.
Three beauty marks;
my heart is on fire!

See the ribbon of gold that I bring
To tie round your hair.
If you want, my beauty, we shall marry!
In our two families, everyone is related!

Yonder by the Church

Yonder, by the church,
By the church of Ayio Sidero,
The church, o blessed Virgin,
The church of Ayio Costanndino,
There are gathered,
Assembled in numbers infinite,
The world's, o blessed Virgin,
All the world's most decent folk!

What gallant compares with me?

What gallant compares with me,
Among those one sees passing by?
Tell me, lady Vassiliki!

See, hanging on my belt,
My pistols and my curved sword.
And it is you whom I love!

The song of the girls collecting mastic

O joy of my soul,
joy of my heart,
treasure which is so dear to me,
joy of my soul and heart,
you whom I love ardently,
you are more handsome than an angel.
O when you appear,
angel so sweet,
Before our eyes,
Like a fine, blond angel,
under the bright sun,
Alas! all of our poor hearts sigh!

V: Tout Gai!

Tout gai! gai, Ha, tout gai!
 Belle jambe, tireli, qui danse;
 Belle jambe, la vaisselle danse,
 Tra la la la la..

Everyone is joyous!

Everyone is joyous, joyous!
 Beautiful legs, tireli, which dance,
 Beautiful legs; even the dishes are dancing!
 Tra la la, la la la!

Collection of Songs by S. Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)**I: Vocalise Op. 34 no. 14**

Rachmaninoff composed his famous wordless "Vocalise" in 1916, completing it as part of his *Fourteen Songs*, Op. 34. Dedicated to the coloratura soprano Antonia Nezhdanova, Rachmaninoff remarked to her, "What need is there for words, when you can convey everything more beautifully and expressively through your voice and interpretation?" The lyrical lines evoke deep emotions of mourning and loss, reflecting the atmosphere of remembrance that surrounded the Great War.

II: Krysolov Op. 38 no. 4

"The Pied Piper" is inspired by the famous legend of the "Rat Catcher of Hamelin," but instead of luring rats, the piper's tune draws in sheep, lambs, and even a loved one. A spiky rhythmic figure in the accompaniment paints a picture of a swaggering, fickle piper.

III: Здесь хорошо Op. 21 no. 7

"Zdes' khorosho" ("How Fair This Spot") is a lyrical outpouring of a person surrounded by nature, gazing upon the beauty of rivers, fields, and sky. In this moment of stillness, they come to realise they are not alone, that God is with them.

II: Krysolov

Я на дудочке играю,
 Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
 И на дудочке играю,
 Чьи-то души веселя.

Я иду вдоль тихой речки,
 Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
 Дремлют тихия овечки,
 Кротко зыблются поля.
 Спите, овцы и барашки,
 Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
 За лугами красной каши
 стройно встали тополя.

Малый домик там таится,
 Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
 Милой девушке приснится,
 Что ей душу отдал я.

И на нежный зов свирели,
 Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
 Выйдет словно к светлой цели,
 через сад, через поля.

И в лесу под дубом тёмным,
 Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
 Будет ждать в бреду истомном,
 В час, когда уснёт земля.

Встречу гостью дорогую,
 Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
 Вплоть до утра зацелую,
 Сердце лаской утоля.

И, сменившись с ней колечком,
 Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля,
 Отпущу её к овечкам,
 В сад, где стройны тополя.

Тра-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля-ля!

The Pied Piper

I play a reed-pipe,
 tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
 I play a reed-pipe,
 cheering up someone's soul.

I walk along a quiet river,
 tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
 Timid sheep are asleep,
 the fields are gently rocking.
 Sleep, sheep and lambs,
 tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
 Beyond the fields of red clover
 stand slender poplars.

A little house is hidden there,
 tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
 A pretty maiden will have a dream,
 That I gave her my soul.

And to the tender call of the reed-pipe,
 tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
 She will come, as if towards a bright dream,
 Through the garden, through the fields.

And in the forest under the dark oak,
 tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
 She will wait in a languorous fever
 At the hour when the earth falls asleep.

I will greet the dear guest,
 tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
 And will kiss her away till dawn,
 Satisfying my heart with tenderness.

And, after we've exchanged rings,
 tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
 I'll put her out with the sheep,
 Into the garden, where slender poplars stand!

Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la

III: Здесь хорошо

Здесь хорошо...
Взгляни, вдали
Огнём горит река;
Цветным ковром луга легли,
Белеют облака.
Здесь нет людей...
Здесь тишина...
Здесь только Бог да я.
Цветы, да старая сосна,
Да ты, мечта моя!

How fair this spot

How nice it is here...
Look – far away,
The river is a blaze of fire;
The meadows lie like carpets of colour
The clouds are white.
Here there is no one...
Here it is silent...
Here is only God and I,
The flowers, the old pine tree,
And you, my dream!

Duetto: 'Sull'aria...che soave Zeffiretto' – *Le nozze di Figaro* - W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)

Premiered in Prague in 1786, *Le nozze di Figaro* is one of the most musically satisfying and accessible operas ever written. One of its most charming and memorable scenes begins with Countess Almaviva asking her maid, Susanna, to help her write a letter to her unfaithful husband, Count Almaviva. The letter is an invitation for a secret meeting that evening in the castle garden. The Count, who has been pursuing Susanna, will believe she is the one waiting for him, but it will in fact be the Countess. As she dictates a poetic description of the moonlit setting, Susanna tenderly echoes each phrase, creating a moment of intimacy, wit, and musical beauty.

LA CONTESSA

Cosa mi narri, e che ne disse il Conte?

SUSANNA

Gli si leggeva in fronte
il dispetto e la rabbia.

LA CONTESSA

Piano, che meglio o lo porremo in gabbia.
Dov'è l'appuntamento
che tu gli proponesti?

SUSANNA

In giardino.

LA CONTESSA

Fissiamgli un loco. Scrivi.

SUSANNA

Ch'io scriva... ma, signora...

LA CONTESSA

Eh, scrivi dico; e tutto
Susanna siede e scrive
io prendo su me stessa.
"Canzonetta sull'aria..."

SUSANNA

"Sull'aria..."

LA CONTESSA

"Che soave zeffiretto..."

SUSANNA

"Zeffiretto..."

LA CONTESSA

"Questa sera spirerà..."

SUSANNA

"Questa sera spirerà..."

LA CONTESSA

"Sotto i pini del boschetto."

SUSANNA

"Sotto i pini..."

LA CONTESSA

"Sotto i pini del boschetto."

SUSANNA

"Sotto i pini...del boschetto..."

LA CONTESSA

Ei già il resto capirà.

SUSANNA

Certo, certo il capirà.

COUNTESS

What things you're telling me! What did the Count say?

SUSANNA

You could read in his face

His indignation and anger.

COUNTESS

Gently now: it will be the easier to catch him,

Where is the rendezvous

That you suggested?

SUSANNA

In the garden.

COUNTESS

Let's fix a place for it. Write to him.

SUSANNA

I write? ... but ... my lady ...

COUNTESS

Write, I tell you,

And I'll take it all upon myself.

Susanna sits down and writes

A song to the zephyr...

SUSANNA

To the zephyr ...

COUNTESS

"How sweet the breeze

SUSANNA

The breeze ...

COUNTESS

"Will be this evening..."

SUSANNA

Will be this evening ...

COUNTESS

"In the pine grove.

SUSANNA

In the pine grove?

COUNTESS

In the pine grove

SUSANNA

In the pine grove

COUNTESS:

The rest he'll understand.

SUSANNA

I'm sure he'll understand.

— INTERVAL —

Aria: Oh! quante volte - *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* - V. Bellini (1801-1835)

Vincenzo Bellini was an Italian opera composer known for his expressive vocal lines and his mastery of the bel canto style, which highlighted the beauty and agility of the human voice. From Act I of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (1830), set in 13th-century Verona, the character Giulietta sings the aria "Oh! quante volte." Romeo's proposal of marriage, which could unite their feuding families, has been rejected, and Giulietta has been betrothed to Tebaldo. Torn between her love for Romeo and her duty to her family, Giulietta expresses her anguish, knowing that following her heart can only lead to pain and tragedy.

Eccomi in lieta vesta...
Eccomi adorna come vittima all'ara.

Here I am in a cheerful attire...
Here I am adorned... like a victim on the altar.

Oh! Almen potessi qual vittima
cader dell'ara al piede!
O nuziali tede, abborrite così fatali,
siate, ah, siate per me faci ferali.

Oh! If only I could as if wounded fall
from the altar to the floor!
Oh wedding candles, you abhor me, so fatal
you are, ah!

Ardo... una vampa,
una foco tutta mi strugge.
(Si affaccia alla finestra, e ritorna.)

You are the candles on my deathbed.
I burn... a flame, a fire
torments me.

Un refrigerio ai venti io chiedo invano.
Ove sei tu, Romeo? In qual terra t'aggiri?
Dove, inviarti, dove i miei sospiri?

I ask for a cool breeze, but in vain.
Where are you, Romeo? In which land?
Where, where should I send you my sighs?

Oh, quante volte, oh quante
ti chiedo al ciel piangendo!
Con quale ardor t'attendo,
e inganno il mio desir!
Raggio del tuo sembiante
ah! parmi il brillar del giorno:
ah! l'aura che spira intorno
mi sembra un tuo sospir.

Oh! How many times, oh, how many,
did I ask the heavens for you, crying!
With such fervour I wait for you,
but my desire is in vain!
The light of your presence
shines for me like daylight:
ah! The air that dances around me
reminds me of your breath.

Selections from *Hermit Songs* Op. 29 - S. Barber (1910-1981)

The poems selected for *Hermit Songs* are anonymous Irish texts dating from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries, written by monks and scholars. The opening song, 'The Heavenly Banquet', envisions the joy and wonder of celebrating with Jesus in eternity. 'The Crucifixion' held particular meaning for Samuel Barber; it moved him so deeply that he requested it be sung at his funeral. The final song, 'Sea-Snatch', vividly portrays the mighty power of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

I: The Heavenly Banquet

II: The Crucifixion

III: Sea Snatch

I. I would like to have the men of Heaven in my own house;
with vats of good cheer laid out for them.
I would like to have the three Mary's, their fame is so great.
I would like people from every corner of Heaven.
I would like them to be cheerful in their drinking.
I would like to have Jesus sitting here among them.
I would like a great lake of beer for the King of Kings.
I would like to be watching Heaven's family
Drinking it through all eternity.

II. At the cry of the first bird
They began to crucify Thee, O Swan!
Never shall lament cease because of that.
It was like the parting of day from night.
Ah, sore was the suffering borne by the body of Mary's Son,
But sorer still to Him was the grief
Which for His sake came upon His Mother.

III. It has broken us, it has crushed us, it has drowned us,
O King of the starbright Kingdom of Heaven!
The wind has consumed us, swallowed us,
As timber is devoured by crimson fire from Heaven.
It has broken us, it has crushed us, it has drowned us,
O King of the starbright Kingdom of Heaven!

Lied: 'Ein Schwan' - Op.25 no 2 - E. Grieg

'A Swan,' is part of Grieg's 6 Songs, Op. 25. This is a song cycle based on poems by the Norwegian playwright and poet Henrik Ibsen. 'Ein Schwan' is about how a swan sings the most beautiful song, but only once, before its death. For Ibsen, the swan symbolised the unexpressed and deep passions of the soul. The fact that a swan sings only in death implies that true emotions or expressions of love were suppressed during life, only coming to life during final, poignant, and tragic moment.

Mein Schwan, mein stiller,
Mit weissem Gefieder,
Deine wonnigen Lieder
Verriet kein Triller.

My swan, my silent one,
With white plumage,
Your delightful songs,
No trill betrayed.

Ängstlich sorgend
Des Elfen im Grunde,
Glittst du horchend
Allzeit in die Runde.

Fearfully mindful of
The elves in the dell,
You glided, listening,
Always in circles.

Und doch bezwangst du
Zuletzt mich beim Scheiden
Mit trüglichen Eiden,
Ja da, da sangst du!

And yet you forced
Our final parting
With false promises.
Yes, there, there you sang!

Du schlossest singend
Die irdische Bahn doch,
Du starbst verklingend;
Du warst ein Schwan doch!

Singing, you closed
Your earthly course.
You died, faded away.
You were a swan nevertheless!

Aria: 'Be Kind and courteous' - A Midsummer Night's Dream - B. Britten (1913-1976)

Titania is the Queen of the Fairies in Benjamin Britten's opera, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, based on Shakespeare's play. In this part of the opera, she instructs her fairies to care for a donkey, having fallen in love with him. What she does not know is that Oberon placed a spell on her to fall in love with the first creature she saw.

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
The honey bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes
To have my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

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