

Reflections and Reminiscences of a Musical Artists' Agent

I have recently retired from many happy years as an artists' manager, and am now also winding down my concert management and promotion activities. I welcome this invitation to look back and share some of my experiences.

I think I always knew that I wanted to have some sort of career in music. By my early teens singing had become my passion. At the age of 15 I wrote to Owen Brannigan, a well-loved singer of that time who had a regular radio programme, and naively asked his advice about how I should go about becoming a professional singer. In due course he introduced me to his own singing teacher, the legendary baritone George Baker, who after auditioning me at the RAM, started giving me weekly lessons. He was a great inspiration to me, and a little later, as an undergraduate at Cambridge, I sang and acted as much as possible.

On graduating I was introduced to the great soprano Dame Isobel Baillie, who continued to teach me for several years. One of my proudest moments was sharing the concert platform with her for her last oratorio performance, in which I sang the baritone part of Mendelssohn's 'Elijah'.

I had fully expected to follow the path of a professional singer, but got side-tracked by my other passion, which was for antiques, and at the tender age of 22 opened an antique shop. This did well, and singing gradually became more of a hobby. Quite a few years later I was asked by my friend, the tenor Jeffrey Lawton, to participate in his music festival in France, and I found myself singing a number of character roles in opera with the cream of emerging young singers. Several of these singers were looking for an agent and suggested that since I had been successful at bargaining and haggling in the world of antiques, I might like to try my hand at artists' management!

My agency initially concentrated on singers, but gradually I took on instrumentalists as well until I had the good fortune to take on the representation of the young pianist Freddy Kempf, who was to become my first really big success. After a few years, as I built up my roster of artists, instrumental soloists eventually replaced the singers.

Fairly early on I was asked to manage and promote concerts for artists from different parts of the world as well as from the UK. The first few were at Bridgewater Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall. Soon I started managing concerts at Wigmore Hall, where I subsequently managed a huge number of concerts, and for which I have such affection: not surprising, since it is arguably the best chamber-music venue in the world today. I have frequently managed concerts at all the other London venues, but Wigmore Hall really does remain my favourite.

I've been very lucky to have worked with many wonderful and great musicians who deservedly have had hugely successful careers. Some have been at the very start of their careers, such as Yevgeny Sudbin, whose recent Scarlatti recording is No. 1 in the classical-music charts at the moment of writing. Others, such as Paul Badura-Skoda and Abbey Simon have been playing marvellously well into their 80s and 90s! One thing that I can say for sure is that although expensive PR can these days possibly manufacture a short, flashy career for some musicians, the exceptionally gifted artists will succeed because their talent really is in a different league from most performers. A good agent or manager has to work hard in order to ensure that the artist is brought to everyone's attention, and the close working relationships that can develop when the manager really cares about not only the success but also the welfare of his or her artists can be wonderfully rewarding (not just financially!) on both sides.

Many amusing incidents have happened during my career, and I would like to share a few with you. Many years ago I took part in a festival in the wine-producing area of South West France. Because I had a large car several of the artists asked me to bring back the wine they had purchased. Before returning I spent a few days in Spain, and on re-entering France was stopped by the French Customs. Convinced I was a wine merchant, they wanted to charge me duty. The chief officer questioned me thoroughly, finally asking me what I had sung: an old French operette favourite, 'Rossignol de mes Amours'. He summoned all the staff and challenged me: "Now sing for us 'Rossignol de

mes Amours". I gave the best performance I could, and was greeted with a standing ovation! As I drove away, all the customs staff waved and cheered me off!

My second story concerns one of my clients who was notorious for his amatory exploits. He asked us to keep for him a large packet of what I took to be compromising letters. Some 20 years later, he was in the middle of an acrimonious divorce and called to ask if I could I return the package to him. I arranged to drive into London, agreeing also to drop off an old friend on the way.

Having explained the story to my friend, I got into the car with the package along with several letters for posting. At the local post office, I asked my friend to post the letters. As you will have guessed, some 10 minutes later, when I glanced down at where the package should have been, it was nowhere to be seen. "You haven't put that package in the post box along with the letters?" I shrieked. We raced back to the post office, but the postmistress stubbornly informed me that anything put in a post box was no longer legally my property and could not be retrieved.

I called my friend to say I was running late, to which he replied, "No problem – as long as you remember to bring that important package!" Heart beating, I waited for the postman to empty the box. Initially, he said he couldn't possibly give it back to me, but he eventually yielded to my pleas, and I was finally able to continue on my way and hand it over as if nothing had happened.

Finally, an anecdote about Sir Simon Bowes Lyon, who on many occasions has kindly offered his historic home as a venue for pre-concert run-throughs. After one of these, he and his wife Caroline attended the concert at Wigmore Hall and the post-concert dinner, which I was organizing together with another guest, the fashion designer Vivienne Westwood. I introduced Sir Simon and Dame Vivienne to each other, and it soon became apparent that neither had the slightest idea who the other was.

Simon mentioned that the artist had played a 'dry run' performance at his home. Vivienne asked him how many had attended. He replied, "Unfortunately, our music room can only take about 80 people," at which she exclaimed in his strong Northern accent, "Then yer moost 'ave a very big 'ouse!" One of the other guests said the name of the house, adding that the Queen Mother had been born there. "The Queen Mother was born in your 'ouse! Does that mean yer know the Queen?" "Oh yes, rather well actually," Sir Simon replied. "You see, we're first cousins, so we grew up together", and so it continued in a rather hilarious fashion.

The next day I recounted the episode to my secretary, Di, doing my best to mimic the two different accents. A few weeks later, Di received a telephone call from Sir Simon declining the invitation to attend our next Wigmore Hall concert. "You see," he explained, "we have the Queen and Prince Philip coming to dinner that evening, which is an engagement one can hardly change."

Di was then convinced that it was really me on the phone playing a joke. "Oh, really?" she replied in a tone of heavy sarcasm. "You have the Queen coming over for dinner, have you? And will Vivienne be coming, too?" On hearing Sir Simon's perplexed reaction, it dawned on her that it might really be the Queen's cousin, and hastily asked my other assistant to dial my mobile phone. On hearing me say, "Hello", she quickly said as politely as possible, "I do hope you have a lovely evening with the Queen!"

I'm afraid there's no more space here for further anecdotes – all of them would fill an entire book. Now maybe that should be a retirement project!

Nigel Grant Rogers



Friends' Voices Music North & South



Photo: Naisha Finkel

I moved to London from the North East just under three years ago, and one of my first steps was to join the LCMS. I knew of its existence from Neil Johnson, whom I had known previously in Newcastle.

I was secretary of the Newcastle International Chamber Music Society for nearly 27 years! When I began, my membership records were in a tin index box; when I left, we had over 1,000 names in a computer looked after by MY secretary, my very computer-literate husband.

The Newcastle Society is the oldest in the country, having commenced in the 1880s. It originally held its committee meetings in the very prestigious Royal Station Hotel, commissioned a string quartet from the composer Charles Villiers Stanford, and its programmes recommended carriages at 9.30 pm. It first presented its concerts

in the beautiful old Georgian building, the Guildhall in the quayside. It moved later to Kings Hall in Newcastle University, supported by the music department, and more recently the wonderful Norman Foster Sage concert hall overlooking the River Tyne. From the spacious glass foyer one can see the brand-new 'Winking Eye' pedestrian bridge and the huge Baltic Flour Mills modern art gallery – all well worth a trip up North!

During my time as secretary I worked as general dogsbody as well as membership secretary, riding on the ups and downs of the Society's fortunes. I helped to draw up contracts, arrange hospitality and liaise with ticketing at the Sage. Mostly more recently, thankfully, I just dealt with season tickets, the Sage box office doing the singles. I knew most of our subscribers, where they wanted to sit and who with. I even knew some who had come originally with their parents and later brought their own children.

Like Kings Place, the Sage has a cafe, restaurant and bars, and I miss in London the regular meeting up with other committee members (later becoming Board members), friends and audience for pre-concert socialising.

We promoted six concerts per year over the winter months. We had the difficulty of having many musicians at least 300 miles away with added transport and hospitality costs, but also an advantage as, generally speaking, we organised the only chamber music in Gateshead/ Newcastle, liaising programming and dates with the Royal Northern Sinfonia Orchestra.

I have always lived in the NE, born in Sunderland and moving between there and Newcastle, working as both teacher and relate counsellor. My own love

of music came mainly from listening to concerts on the Home Service, on the radio. I was introduced to chamber music when engaged to my husband – six of our first dates consisted of attending a week of concerts by the Aeolian String Quartet when they brought the six Bartók Quartets during one of their annual visits to Newcastle, in the late 50s. Later my husband remarked it was a kind of test; if I hadn't sat through them, he might not have married me! I THINK he was kidding! Now I love this music, the intimacy of it, being able to follow the threads and ideas between the players, the immediacy of each note and sound. I have never actually played an instrument myself. I am audience material, but I guess that is pretty important, too.

I certainly can get my fill here in London. I do like Kings Place, very convenient for me, straight down the Northern line from North Finchley. Sometimes I get out at Camden and walk along the canal. As 'mere Northerner' I can hardly believe the transformation that has taken place around King's Cross and Granary Square, all very exciting. There is a pleasant informality about the venue (and the sightlines are better than at the Wigmore). It has foyer concerts and art exhibitions thrown in. There is a surfeit of good things in London, but I still miss the North East with its coast, moors, forests and castles. Far less cultural activity than London, but enough. I never felt deprived there.

I am still finding my feet here, but learning and discovering lots of new things. Coming pretty regularly to the LCMS gives me a sort of familiar base with some familiar faces. I am looking forward to many more concerts and new friends.

and long-standing friend of the LCMS about his career. In an article by John himself, John reveals why he and Raphael Wallfisch have chosen the works they will perform at their LCMS concert. "We wanted to play works close to our hearts, featuring major British things alongside works we just love to play. So for the Kings Place anniversary launch we are juxtaposing two old European favourites and two masterpieces from composers we are pleased to have called friends."

Jonathan Dove, whose 'Who Wrote the Book of Love?' is given its world premiere by the Dante Quartet on 12 February, responds to questions about his work and new composition in an interview by LCMS Trustee Walter Rudeloff. Each of the lyrics explores love from a different angle. Intriguingly, he found that "this offers a lot of musical possibilities ... and every song uses a different mode."

Occasionally, we are able to include an article about a specialised role in the music world. For this issue, musical artists' agent Nigel Grant Rogers has provided us with his reflections and reminiscences of his illustrious career in concert management and promotion activities, during which he represented, among others, Freddy Kempf, Yevgeny Sudbin, Paul Badura-Skoda and Abbey Simon.

As usual, this issue contains a few other gems for your delectation. And as the seasonal darkness draws in, we hope that the music on offer at London Chamber Music Sundays will bring welcome light into our lives. As my old piano teacher was fond of saying, "Thank God for music!"

CHAMBER MUSIC NOTES

The LCMS Magazine

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Welcome!



Looking over the LCMS 2016/17 Concert Diary, I find myself in complete agreement with our Artistic Director, Peter Fribbins, that this season is "our most ambitious yet in terms of variety and scope of programming."

Peter's 'Behind the Notes' column in this issue of *Chamber Music Notes* describes how he has gradually been exploring the sonorous potential of Hall 1 since 2008, when we moved to Kings Place. Of course, we have retained all our favourite classics – Beethoven and Schubert quartets; Brahms and Dvůřák; plenty of Haydn and Mozart – but also this year we present music ranging from

all the Beethoven Op. 9 string trios, a wind quintet made from the principals of the Philharmonia Orchestra, concerts in both the Baroque Unwrapped and Cello Unwrapped series, no fewer than two chamber orchestras, and even a choir!

Also in this issue, acclaimed pianist Andrew Brownell, who is joined by the Winds of the Philharmonia Orchestra to play the beautiful Sextet of Ludwig Thuille on 30 October, writes about the 19th-century composer, who is undergoing something of a revival at the moment. A lifelong friend and collaborator of Richard Strauss, Thuille was a major figure in the musical life of fin de siècle Munich.

This issue brings you a double feature of John York, who will be launching the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the duo of cellist Raphael Wallfisch and pianist John York at their concert on 22 January. The peripatetic Leon Levy travelled to South London to interview the pianist, teacher, composer,

Jane Sufian
Editor

Thuille: Sextet in B flat for winds and piano

On 30 October, players of the Philharmonia Orchestra will join me on the stage of Kings Place for an evening of chamber music for winds and piano, in a programme including some well-loved works by Mozart and Poulenc. However, we will close the programme with the Sextet of Ludwig Thuille, perhaps the only work to have retained a place, however tenuous, in the repertoire by this largely forgotten composer.

Nevertheless, Thuille was a major figure in the musical life of fin de siècle Munich. A prolific and successful composer of vocal music, especially opera, his students included Bloch and von Kléna, as well as the conductor Hermann Abendroth. Born in 1861 in what is now the Italian Tyrol, he displayed enormous musical talent from a young age and was sent as a teenager to Innsbruck for more serious training. Here, he met fellow student Richard Strauss, who would become a lifelong friend and collaborator. Despite this friendship, Thuille remained a relatively conservative composer throughout his brief life, possibly a reflection of his studies with the organist Josef Rheinberger, whom he succeeded as professor of composition in Munich. Tending toward formal structures and a more conservative approach to harmony, this conservatism in such proximity to Strauss and Reger probably led inevitably to his being eclipsed.

Thuille's operas were either well-received or highly successful in his lifetime, but short-lived in that they essentially disappeared from the stage by World War One. There has also been some recent criticism that he worked with inferior or problematic librettists. His first effort in the genre, *Theurdank*, was based on a libretto by the composer Alexander Ritter, which won an operatic competition in 1897. His next two operas were based on libretti by the writer Otto Julius Bierbaum. The first of these, *Lobetanz*, enjoyed widespread acclaim, being performed as far afield as the New York Metropolitan Opera in 1911. Thuille did not live to see this performance, having died prematurely in 1907.

Even if Thuille has been largely forgotten, it is not difficult to understand why his Sextet for winds and piano, Op. 6, has never completely disappeared. It is written for a combination of instruments that does not have a large repertoire, and it has an immediate, uncomplicated appeal, which must have been refreshing at a time when scaling dramatic heights and plumbing emotional depths seems to have been compulsory in chamber music.

Strauss arranged for the Sextet to be premiered in 1889 at the Wiesbaden Festival. It is curious that Thuille should have had such a progressive advocate for a piece whose beginning so closely recalls Brahms' second piano concerto. The opening horn call transforms into something slightly more vigorous as it is passed around the other instruments, yet it remains genial. To me, the secondary themes retain some of the dreamy nostalgia of the opening, and although they eventually work up to a frenzy, it is still a poised one. A greater degree of turbulence dominates the development, though even here the drama never approaches genuine menace, and the noble character of the themes is further reinforced in a coda.

A horn solo also opens the slow movement, though this becomes a dialogue – highly formal in design – between various groups of instruments. A stormy middle section gives way to a beguilingly chromatic theme, the first real glimpse of Strauss-like harmonies in this work. In the quirky Gavotte, Thuille seems less interested in evoking the Baroque than a 'bergamasque' scene, as described in the chansons of the young Debussy or mature Fauré. The music sounds deliberately French to me, especially in its harmonic language, hardly an accident for an influential teacher of harmony. The finale is a joyous gallop, spiced with a few eyebrow-raising moments of chromaticism.

After opera, chamber music occupies the most prominent place in Thuille's output. The second Piano Quintet, Op. 20, has been recorded a few times and would be an excellent starting point for further exploration of his music. But why miss a live performance of the charming Sextet? We hope to see you at Kings Place on 30 October!

Andrew Brownell

Acclaimed pianist Andrew Brownell and the Winds of the Philharmonia perform Thuille's Sextet at the LCMS concert on 30 October.



Chamber Music Notes Editorial Group: Chris Bradshaw, Leon Levy, Walter Rudeloff, Jane Sufian (editor)

Books

'Beethoven for a Later Age: The journey of a string quartet'

by Edward Dusinberre. Faber & Faber.



It's always good to have another reason to return to the Beethoven quartets, and this book certainly gave me the impetus to look again at this endlessly fascinating body of work. It is an interesting complement to the Beethoven works variously performed at Kings Place, not least the six concerts given by the Chilingirian Quartet in their current Mozart/Bartók/Beethoven series or the Chiaroscuro Quartet's concert on 8 January 2017.

Dusinberre has woven an engrossing picture around the quartets, embracing both the historical background of the time and his own journey within the Takács Quartet. And what a journey! In 1993, at only 23 years, the author joined three Hungarian musicians as first violin of their already well-established ensemble, the Takács Quartet, founded in 1975. His audition started with a sociable dinner, continued over weeks with music and conversation, eventually culminating with the 'yes' result, at which point he would join them and become part of a family of four.

He traces both the progress of his playing and his interaction with his colleagues over more than 20 years, sounding quite captivated by the Hungarians' warm attitude to music and life – even if a little self-deprecating as regards his own playing. But doubts spring up in all four players from time to time, and it is fascinating to feel the tensions, emotions and humour as the quartet gets to grips with the music: is the phrasing right? what mood is needed? how can a consensus be reached but ideas not set in stone? how to be accurate and in agreement with each other, yet still play spontaneously both for themselves and for an audience.

A musical ensemble has many of the features of family life, and this group certainly do not always agree with each other; but emotions and struggle over interpretation, speed, bowing technique, intonation, etc., are resolved with a combination of very hard work and a lot of humour. The author presents us with the "3 Bears Syndrome": not too much, not too little, but just (musically) right.

But this is not an account of musical angst. The historical background of Beethoven's compositions is nicely juxtaposed with the 20th-century quartet. It certainly renewed my interest in the Napoleonic Wars era and life in Bonn, Vienna and Hungary. We are also reacquainted with Beethoven's Russian friend and

Chris Bradshaw



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Behind the Notes

If I'm counting correctly, the 2016/17 season is the 15th I have arranged for the London Chamber Music Society – my first was the 2002/03 season. Back then, of course, we were based at the Conway Hall, and the basis of programming was string quartets interspersed with trios and occasional duos. When finances permitted, a piano quintet was added to the mix.

With the move to the larger stage of Kings Place in 2008, a little more variety became possible, and we have gradually been exploring the sonoric potential of the hall. However, it has taken me all these years to work out the mechanics of hosting larger ensembles and chamber orchestras. In the last four years, we have now hosted the Orchestra of St John's (conducted by their founder, John Lubbock), the London Firebird Orchestra, the Cambridge University Chamber Orchestra, and string orchestras such as Yuri Zhislin's Russian Virtuosi of Europe. I hope LCMS Friends would agree with me that this has provided an excellent contrast with the more intimate chamber forces that constitute most of our programming, with the

fabulous trios, quartets and quintets of classical and romantic master composers.

This season represents our most ambitious in terms of variety and scope of programming: still all our favourite classics, of course – Beethoven and Schubert quartets; Brahms and Dvořák; plenty of Haydn and Mozart – but also this year, music ranging from all the Beethoven Op. 9 string trios, a wind quintet made from the principals of the Philharmonia Orchestra, concerts in both the Baroque Unwrapped and Cello Unwrapped series, no fewer than two chamber orchestras, and even a choir!

The choir in question, Sonoro, is a wonderful new one, formed in 2015, and which I heard in concert at a church in Lancaster Gate earlier this year. They performed with such colour, energy, expertise and enthusiasm, I realised they would be perfect for the LCMS series at Kings Place – and what better slot than our last concert before Christmas on December 18? They will perform a wide variety of repertoire, including Britten's ever-popular 'A Ceremony of Carols'.

The week before, on December 11, we host the English Symphony Orchestra in their exciting Kings Place debut. Kenneth Woods, their principal conductor, will lead the orchestra in symphonies by Haydn and Mozart – his popular G minor Symphony – and be joined by the famous clarinettist Emma Johnson in one of the most beautiful of modern clarinet concertos, the wonderfully evocative 'Lost Lanes, Shadow Groves' by James Francis Brown.

The other chamber orchestra appearing this season is something I am particularly excited about: the Berlin Kammerphilharmonie, conducted by their founder, Juergen Bruns. I first met Juergen and heard his orchestra on a visit to Berlin early last year. Their musicianship and finely intelligent interpretations, as you would expect from a professional Berlin orchestra, were superb; yet I was astonished to learn that they had never performed in the UK. This was something I had to fix!

So on February 19, the LCMS will host the famous Berlin Kammerphilharmonie orchestra in a concert of music by Haydn, Elgar, Mozart, and the early-20th-century Czech composer Pavel Haas. The orchestra, now in its 25th year, was formed in 1991 by musicians from the Berliner Sinfonie-Orchester and members of the orchestras

from the three opera houses in Berlin. They have established a reputation, in particular, for performing lost or forgotten repertoire from the early 20th century, and especially music banned by the Nazis, or by composers lost in the Holocaust. The supremely talented Pavel Haas, who died at Auschwitz in 1944 aged only 45, is one of the composers brought back into the repertoire by Juergen and the orchestra.

The Kammerphilharmonie's many CD recordings also represent a significant contribution to music; not only of newly discovered works, but new interpretations of old ones. For instance, their 2002 recording of Kurt Weill's Symphony No. 2 (for chamber orchestra) from the early 1930s is the best I have heard, and reveals the piece as a powerful neo-baroque/classical symphony (the CD is also coupled with music by the German émigré Berthold Goldschmidt). I would love to be able to programme this at Kings Place!

Other highlights for the 2016/17 season include the second half of our Mozart-Bartók-Beethoven series with the Chilingirian Quartet; and the Allegri, Wihan, Tippett, Dante and Fitzwilliam quartets – also very loyal regulars in our music making. The famous Chiaroscuro Quartet makes its debut at Kings Place on January 8, which should be a memorable occasion, as well as a 'rising-stars' string quartet from our relationship with the Park Lane Group, the excellent Solem Quartet (with the superb Estonian pianist Maksim Situra), on May 14.

We also have return appearances by the wonderful Rosamunde and Phoenix piano trios; a trio of string trios – each joined by a pianist to perform all three piano quartets by Brahms; and baroque ensembles such as the joyous Red Priest. The famous cello and piano duo of Raphael Wallfisch and John York – who have now performed annually for the LCMS for more than 25 years! – join us on January 22. On April 23 we host two fabulous Italian artists, the violin and piano duo of Alberto Bologni and Giuseppe Bruno; and Russian violinist Yuri Zhislin and friends are joined by soprano Gillian Keith to perform achingly beautiful repertoire for voice, piano and strings on January 29. With luck, 2016/17 should be a veritable musical *annus mirabilis!*

Dr Peter Fribbins
LCMS Artistic Director

'A Fitting Celebration'

John York reveals why he and Raphael Wallfisch have chosen the works they will perform at their LCMS concert on 22 January 2017.

I have fortunately kept a fairly comprehensive archive of all of my performing career. (Maybe all musicians do, hoping it'll be a long and fascinating read later in life!) Mine was launched with a solo recital in the Wigmore Hall in 1974, and developed initially in association with Canadian clarinettist James Campbell and two British cellists, Moray Welsh and especially Melissa Phelps, with whom I played so many concerts over more than a decade. Another duo became important for me too, when Fiona and I were married in 1981 and formed York2. Thus it was in duo sonatas and small chamber groupings that my musical life has thrived. The repertoire I learned and performed with those fine colleagues set me up perfectly and has stayed with me ever since.

It was not too difficult to pinpoint the first occasion when Raphael and I played together: 1982 in Ranger's House on Blackheath, and we included Mendelssohn's B flat Sonata and the Poulenc sonata. Raphael was still playing with his father Peter at that time, and they had already built a reputation, especially in 20th-century British music. But I played sometimes, when Peter was too busy with his own work, or simply not keen to perform something.

2017, therefore, is the duo's 35th anniversary year, an achievement perhaps never matched by any other duo, and it is launched at Kings Place on January 22. How should we kick things off though? We were spoiled for choice, of course! We have so many times played the full Beethoven cycle and, like all duos, we love the wonderful Brahms sonatas. Should we perhaps give a recital of just those two great composers?

We wanted to play works close to our hearts, featuring major British things alongside works we just love to play. Raphael is rightly celebrated for his championing of British concertos, so many of which he's recorded, broadcast and played at the Proms, and he and I have played and recorded just about every sonata by those same composers and others besides. This is an enormous, richly

varied and entertaining source of nearly unlimited repertoire. We have even explored unpublished and forgotten sonatas, and found some of them outstanding and unjustifiably neglected. But we do acknowledge that this repertoire might not be everyone's first choice for a recital, and it will forever be our duty and delight to 'sell' it to as wide an audience as possible with interesting programming and happy juxtapositions.

Mixing it with the mainstream European music of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries is easy. From Bach through Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms and Grieg, to Debussy, Shostakovich and right up to today's leading composers – all the major composers wrote substantial works for cello and piano, and Raphael and I have revelled in this inexhaustible *embaras de richesses*.

So for the Kings Place anniversary launch we are juxtaposing two old European favourites and two masterpieces from composers we are pleased to have called friends. Kenneth Leighton (Alleluia Pascha Nostrum, Op. 85), sadly no longer with us, was a good friend of Raphael and his father. James MacMillan (Cello Sonata No. 1 – commissioned by Raphael, first performed by Raphael and John in Bath, May 1999) was a composition student of Leighton, and became our friend after Raphael performed MacMillan's concerto several times, and both the Alleluia and the cello sonata are dedicated to Raphael.

The pieces share a wonderful life-affirming intensity and idiomatic instrumental skills. Both composers are also able to make their music accessible to the listener. This is passionate, emotional, gutsy music, full of melody and dance as well as extraordinary drama and avant-garde eruptions.

The two Romantic masterpieces (Felix Mendelssohn, Cello Sonata No. 2 in D, Op. 58; and Edvard Grieg, Cello Sonata in A minor, Op. 36), each written for the composer's cellist-brother to play, are Wallfisch-York and audience favourites, unabashedly exuberant – the perfect foil for those late 20th-century scores. It's easy to understand why audiences everywhere enjoy them. The tunes are unfailingly beautiful and free-flowing, as you'd expect from these men, and what they both do with those melodies is great fun, never drily intellectual.



photo: Alex York

Why are they also favourites of mine, though? I personally love playing very fast. Which pianist doesn't?! No composer demands faster fingers than Mendelssohn. And I, like most pianists, enjoy playing very loudly, too, when appropriate, so it is a good feeling when I am told to deliver massive resonances in the Grieg and also in the MacMillan. Raphael in the latter has to draw out sounds from his cello that are, to say the least, surprising and unexpected, even shocking, and sometimes we are instructed NOT to play together. Learning these techniques with the composer sitting beside us was challenging, tough and thrilling.

I do also appreciate a clever development section and a well-proportioned formal structure. Where Mendelssohn in his D major sonata makes a nod backwards here and there to his beloved Bach, Grieg takes ideas from his own very successful A minor piano concerto and delivers a Norse fairy tale with all the associated romance and plenty of legendary troll action. Not for Grieg the intellectual workouts of Beethoven, Brahms or Bartók. His effect is both simpler and more generous, and the balanced virtuosity of his sonata makes a great clincher in our recital – and a fitting celebration of our duo's longevity.

Leon Levy Meets John York

John York and Raphael Wallfisch will be performing at the LCMS concert on 22 January, as part of the 'Cello Unwrapped' series.

Another trip south of the river (always an adventure for a North Londoner), this time to the home of John York – pianist, teacher, composer, and long-standing friend of the LCMS.

John's connection with music began at the age of four, actively encouraged by his mother, who played the piano at salon concerts. He was born and brought up in Eastbourne and was taught over a period of 12 years by Winifred Mills, who conveniently lived 'round the corner'.

He attended Eastbourne Grammar School, which had an excellent music department, and where he excelled in all subjects as well as taking part in the school's annual ambitious opera production.

Then to the Guildhall, where he studied piano and composition and won scholarships to Paris and Vienna. Returning to England at the age of 24, he was invited to teach at the Guildhall, where he remained for 33 years. His Wigmore Hall debut took place in 1974; Ibbs and Tillett came calling, and his professional musical career took off.

As with many other successful musicians, John has experienced what many describe as the 'cauldron of competitions'. After winning the International Debussy Piano Competition in Paris in 1973, the following year he entered the Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow. To be accepted for this, artists needed to be invited and to submit CDs and references. He described his three-week stay in Moscow as an awful experience – especially as the then-Soviet Union was alive and well. But he is adamant that competitions are a necessary evil of a musician's career: they force you to work hard and get to grips with a wide variety of music.

Wagner's Ring cycle at Covent Garden in 1979 also proved to be an outstanding event in John's life. With a spare ticket, he invited Fiona, one of his students, to attend with him. She accepted, and later became his wife. Fiona York is now an established professional pianist of many years, as well as duo partner with her husband, and a teacher. So here is a useful tip for any men out there looking to impress a lady friend – try Wagner's Ring cycle!

The range of John's professional interests has grown over the years. He is an established composer, but treads carefully as he prefers to restrict his composing to pieces that he knows are going to be performed.

Every summer he attends the prestigious Astona International Summer Music Academy in Switzerland, where he coaches highly talented musicians from all over the world. His 40-year career has taken him around the world, and for



photo: Andrew Palmer

Getting to Know You

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



photo: Martin Kemdrick

Rosie Chapman

Classical Programme Coordinator, KPMS
Rosie joined the Kings Place team in October 2015 as the Classical Programme Coordinator, having previously worked for the Academy of Ancient Music, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and International Classical Artists.

Rosie began learning the piano and violin at the age of six, and soon started playing in youth string and orchestra ensembles. She progressed with the violin in orchestral playing and led her county youth orchestra on two tours in Europe, as well as concerts at Snape Maltings Concert Hall. Rosie then chose to continue studying the violin for her university studies -- she attended the University of Leeds for three years, where she performed regularly with the Leeds University Symphony Orchestra and led the Leeds University Chamber Orchestra.

After an internship with the Academy of Ancient Music, Rosie worked for the Academy of St Martin in the Fields for four years, developing the education strand of the orchestra's output and touring with the orchestra. In need of a change and development in her career, Rosie began work as an assistant artist manager for International Classical Artists, building relationships with artists, conductors and promoters. This gave her a good background in orchestra and artist management to take those skills to a world-class arts venue.

Rosie immensely enjoys working on the Kings Place classical programme, developing the existing artistic relationships, such as the wonderful LCMS series, and finding new ones!

When not at her desk in the basement at Kings Place, Rosie loves watching films, relaxing in pubs with friends, making the most of BBQ weather in the summer, currys (the food, not the electrical store), holidays, spending time with family, and picking up the violin on the odd occasion!

Claire Lees

Box Office Assistant, KPMS

Claire moved to London in January 2013, and started working at the Kings Place Box Office in September. She has previously worked on the Box Office at the Symphony Hall, Birmingham, while she studied for her BMus(Hons) at the Birmingham Conservatoire. Claire, who is originally

from Lancashire, is a soprano and currently studies on the Opera Course at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama under the tutelage of Yvonne Kenny.

Operatic roles have included Yum Yum, 'The Mikado'; Gianetta, 'The Gondoliers' (National Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company); Papagena, 'Die Zauberflöte' (Crescent Theatre, Birmingham); and Drusilla, 'L'incoronazione di Poppea' (Crescent Theatre, Birmingham). As part of scene performances, roles have included Manon, 'Manon'; Romilda, 'Serses'; Sophie, 'Der Rosenkavalier'; Zerlina, 'Don Giovanni'; and Lisette, 'La Rondine'.

Claire is also a keen recitalist, and recently performed at St James's Piccadilly and St Martin-in-the-Fields as part of the Concordia Recital Series. Other concert performances include Songs of Debussy, a Pre-LSO Platform at the Barbican Hall; Howard Goodall's 'Every Purpose Under the Heaven' at Peterborough Cathedral; and excerpts from Haydn's 'The Creation' for an LSO Come and Sing Day.

In July this year Claire made her role debut as Pamina in 'The Magic Flute' with Charles Court Opera for Iford Arts. She also recently worked with Iain Burnside on his 'Drums and Guns' project in collaboration with The Juilliard School and the Royal Irish Academy of Music, performing in Dublin at the Lir Theatre, in London at the Milton Court Theatre, and in New York at The Juilliard School.

Claire loves working at Kings Place: she finds the variety of events really interesting and likes meeting fellow music enthusiasts. When not singing, Claire is a keen cook, and enjoys 'Pizza and Prosecco' evenings with her friends.

photo: SJ Charlesworth