

Jess Gillam & Bath Philharmonia

Thursday 1 July 2021, 7.30pm, The Bath Forum



PROGRAMME

Edward Elgar,
Serenade for Strings Op.20

Will Gregory,
Orbit

Henry Purcell,
Chaconne from The Fairy Queen

Alessandro Marcello,
Oboe Concerto (arr. Harle)

Ralph Vaughan Williams,
Five Variants of Dives & Lazarus

Thom Yorke,
Suspirium (arr. Rimmer)

William Walton,
'Touch her soft lips and part'

Luke Howard,
Dappled Light

Ralph Vaughan Williams,
Fantasia on Greensleeves

John Harle,
Flare

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INTRODUCTION TO THE MUSIC BY JASON THORNTON, MUSIC DIRECTOR, BATH PHILHARMONIA

While preparing for this concert, I've been hit by nostalgia for life before lockdown. Happy times, sad times, reflective times but I've reached an acknowledgement that life has changed and will change further. As Thom Yorke says, 'all is well as long as we keep spinning'. With funding from the government's Cultural Recovery Fund and continuing support from The Roper Family Charitable Trust, Bath Phil is able to bring you two concerts celebrating the live orchestral experience.

For this concert, we bring together repertoire that I've known and loved for a long time with many new contemporary pieces that I've just discovered thanks to Jess Gillam. There are many connections between these pieces; they borrow from the past but look towards the future. All the music is directly influenced by the human voice and song.

I'll let the music speak for itself.
Jason

Edward Elgar, *Serenade for Strings Op.20*

I *Allegro*
II *Larghetto*
III *Allegretto*

Elgar dedicated this piece to his friend, the organ builder, Edward Whinfield. Written in 1892, it is an apparent re-working of an earlier uncompleted suite. The Serenade is one of Elgar's earliest works and remains a frequent feature of his canon today. The Serenade was written for the Worcester Ladies Orchestral Class, an ensemble that Elgar conducted himself. The music evokes the Worcestershire countryside with its gentle hill sides, flowers, and meandering rivers. I absolutely adore this piece for its simplicity and its gentle beauty.

Will Gregory, *Orbit*



Written by Bath based musician and producer Will Gregory for Jess Gillam's most recent album, *Time*, this piece is scored for strings, bass synth and marimba.

Will describes the piece 'Orbit is a circular journey presenting different facets of the same

underlying view... being by turns subtle and crude, rational, then cajoling, then pleading.'

Henry Purcell, *Chaconne from The Fairy Queen*

Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* is one of his final works. Written in 1692, it is a type of 'semi-opera'; half pantomime/half opera and of its time, a smash hit in Drury Lane. The opera was lost until the early twentieth century and all modern editions come from Benjamin Britten's re-working of the piece. The Chaconne is a dance from the last scene of the last act.

Alessandro Marcello, *Oboe Concerto (arr. Harle)*

I *Andante*
II *Adagio*
III *Presto*

Published in 1717, Marcello's Oboe Concerto was a real hit with performers and audiences alike throughout Europe; so much so that J.S.Bach arranged it for solo keyboard! In this edition, composer and saxophonist John Harle, who also happens to be Jess' teacher, has made yet another arrangement of the work for saxophone and strings. Sophisticated and poised, this is Baroque music written in the so-called Gallant Style.

Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Five Variants of Dives & Lazarus*

Commissioned by the British Council for a performance at the World Fair in New York in 1939, this piece is a set of 5 variations on the folk tune 'Dives and Lazarus' that Vaughan Williams used in his English Folk Song Suite. It was premiered by the New York Philharmonic in Carnegie Hall on 10th June 1939 conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. Vaughan Williams first came across the tune in 1893 when he was 21. He said of the tune "...I had a sense of recognition – here's something I had known all my life without knowing it." The 'old' modal qualities of this tune bring a serene sense of stillness and beauty to the piece.

Thom Yorke, *Suspirium (arr. Rimmer)*

Jess Gillam says, 'I have listened to Radiohead and Thom Yorke's voice since I was very young... This song was written as part of the soundtrack to the horror film 'Suspiria' – it is dripping with melancholy, yet it has such a strangely hypnotic and beautiful quality. In this arrangement by Benjamin Rimmer, the song almost feels like folk music and I absolutely love trying to replicated the tragic romance of Thom Yorke's voice. There is a line in the lyrics, 'all is well, as long as we keep spinning', that really resonated with me and seems even more relevant in these strange times".

William Walton,

'Touch her soft lips and part'

Originally part of Walton's film score to Henry V (starring Laurence Olivier) and composed in 1943, this intimate string music tells the tale of an emotional farewell kiss between the king and his lover.

Luke Howard, *Dappled Light*

Brilliant young British composer Luke Howard was commissioned by Jess Gillam to compose a piece for her album, *Time*. Jess comments, 'It's a stunning musical reflection on early dawn. I felt as though I was echoing birdsong when I recorded the saxophone line.'

Ralph Vaughan Williams,

Fantasia on Greensleeves

This exquisite four-minute orchestral miniature has far eclipsed the song it was inspired by: namely, 'Greensleeves', a traditional melody that was doing the rounds in the days of the Tudors and that is put to masterful use here by Vaughan Williams. This piece was initially used in the third act of the composer's Shakespeare-inspired opera *Sir John in Love*. The *Fantasia on Greensleeves* uses both the traditional tune but also the melody 'Lovely Joan', that Vaughan Williams came across in Suffolk. In 1934, under the watchful eye of the composer, Ralph Greaves arranged Vaughan Williams's music into the version we most commonly hear today.

John Harle, *Flare*

(*Second Movement of John Harle's Briggflatts*)

Briggflatts is the title of an epic autobiographical poem by Basil Bunting (1900-1985) and is the inspiration for this work written specifically for Jess Gillam by John Harle. The title comes from the name of the Briggflatts Quaker Meeting House near Sedbergh in Cumbria that Bunting regularly attended.

Bunting believed that the essential element of poetry is the sound and that if the sound is right, the listener will hear, enjoy and be moved, and that there may be no need for further explanation.

John Harle writes, 'Above all, the effect of *Briggflatts* is accessibility and vocal colour and on re-reading the poem, I was attracted to the idea of a 'suite' for Jess Gillam as it allows for independent movements to parallel the episodic, disparate and seasonal sections of the poetry. *Briggflatts* takes its inspiration from Cumbria, Jess' own part of England.'



JESS GILLAM (SAXOPHONE)

Hailing from Ulverston in Cumbria, Jess Gillam is animating the music world with her outstanding talent and infectious personality.

After performing at the prestigious Last Night of the Proms in 2018 and having her performance described as "the indisputable highlight" by BBC News, Jess continues to grow her international career as well as presenting on TV and Radio.

Jess is passionate about inspiring and bringing joy to people through music and has continued to do so throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. In May 2020 Jess appeared as a special guest at the Royal Albert Hall's VE Day 75 Commemoration and in July she returned for a performance as part of the 'Royal Albert Home' series. While in lock-down Jess launched her Virtual Scratch Orchestra, inviting musicians of any standard to come together to play music virtually with her. The orchestra played music by David Bowie and The Beatles as well as a Christmas special of Leroy Anderson's *Sleigh Ride*. Over 2,000 people from around 30 different countries took part across the two projects, aged 2-94, playing a huge range of instruments.

Recently (before the impacts of COVID-19), Jess has enjoyed performances around the globe. Highlights include

performances at the Last Night of the BBC Proms Japan, with the Minnesota Orchestra, at the Lucerne Festival and with Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. This season she continues to perform throughout the UK and Europe in recital as well as with BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the Hallé, Manchester Camerata and the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. In addition, Jess has been chosen as one of ECHO's Rising Stars for season 2020-21, which will see her performing in prestigious venues all over Europe and premiering a special commission written for her by Edmund Finnis. Jess will also tour for the first time with her own band – the Jess Gillam Ensemble – with what promises to be an explosive concert designed to showcase the diversity, dynamism and versatility of the saxophone!

Jess is the first ever saxophonist to be signed to Decca Classics and recently released her second album, 'TIME', which shot to No.1 in the Official UK Classical Charts, as did her debut album 'RISE'. Jess curated the album to mirror the arc of energy in a passing day and the constant orbit of our existence. She loves music from many genres and the album includes music by Nyman, Björk, Meredith Monk, James Blake, Max Richter, Joby Talbot, Brian Eno, Anna Meredith and Thom Yorke. Keen to expand the saxophone repertoire, she also had two pieces written for the album – one by Luke Howard and one by Goldfrapp's Will Gregory. She has also commissioned and premiered music by Anna Clyne and John Harle and is constantly working on new commissioning projects. Jess' debut album was released in 2019 and features a selection of her favourite pieces ranging from Marcello and Shostakovich to David Bowie and Kate Bush. Both albums have been highly celebrated and received rave reviews.

Gillam is also a presenter on TV and Radio. She became the youngest ever presenter for BBC Radio 3 and hosts her own weekly show and podcast called "This Classical Life" where she

chats to musical guests to swap tracks and share the music they love. The show has been very well received by audiences and critics alike and in 2020 won the award for 'Best Specialist Music Programme' at the Audio & Radio Industry Awards (ARIAS) a BBC Music Award in the 'Best Music Production' category. She has also been a guest presenter for BBC Radio 2 on "Sunday Night is Music Night" and co-hosted a mini series with James Naughtie for BBC Radio 4 on the Today Programme. The Guardian has stated "there are many more established presenters who lack Gillam's warmth and impressive ability". In 2019 Jess also presented five BBC Proms live on television alongside Katie Derham and Tom Service.

She has been the recipient of a Classic BRIT Award (in the Sound of Classical Poll), was the first ever saxophonist to reach the final of BBC Young Musician, and in 2019, performed live at the BAFTAs (British Academy of Film and Television Awards) to millions of viewers at home. In 2020 Jess has been nominated for The Times Breakthrough Award.

Jess studied and was mentored by the legendary saxophonist John Harle and graduated from Guildhall School of Music with a Masters with distinction in 2020.

A free spirit in style and character, Gillam is a passionate advocate for the power of music in society, often combining her concert engagements with educational and social projects. She is a patron for Awards for Young Musicians and a trustee for the HarrisonParrott Foundation, working towards full inclusivity of all ethnicities, genders, disabilities and social backgrounds with equal access to the arts.

She is a Vandoren UK Artist and became the youngest ever endorsee for Yanagisawa Saxophones aged just 13. She is a lover of live music and continues to promote her own concert series, bringing international talent to her hometown of Ulverston.

JASON THORNTON (CONDUCTOR)

Jason Thornton is Music Director of Bath Philharmonia. He has conducted orchestras throughout the UK, Europe, America and the Far East, including the RPO, London Mozart Players, City of London Sinfonia, Beijing Symphony Orchestra, Jyväskylä Sinfonia (Finland) and the Kaposvar Symphony Orchestra (Hungary).

Jason grew up in the West Midlands and was recipient of a free musical education courtesy of Sandwell Music Service. He switched viola playing for conducting at the age of 16, conducting various youth ensembles and forming Sandwell Sinfonia, his own orchestra inspired by collaborations with friends. Studies for a PGCE brought him to Bath where he formed Bath Philharmonia and since then has had an amazing time making music with everyone from local school children to some of the world's finest musicians including Renee Fleming, Sir Willard White, Joseph Calleja, Sumi Jo, Nicola Benedetti, Jennifer Pike, Tasmin Little, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Jess Gillam, Peter Donohoe and Stephen Hough.

Jason is also a Community Music Leader, directing many creative learning projects throughout the UK and abroad in numerous contexts, working with orchestras, schools, music hubs, festivals and venues.



BATH PHILHARMONIA



Bath Philharmonia is a family of musicians dedicated to making orchestral music part of life for many people. Our home is the World Heritage City of Bath and we tour to many different venues across the South West of England. Established at the turn of the millennium, we have over 20 years' experience of bringing people together musically to share our core values of excellence, togetherness, inclusivity, sustainability and enjoyment.



We build relationships with our community partners to devise collaborative projects that result in collective experiences in which everyone's contribution counts. We have a ten-year track-record in enabling Young Carers to make and perform their own music and in 2019, were nominated for the RPS Award in the category of Impact. Over the past two seasons, the Bath Phil Creative Learning Team has delivered over 20 projects involving over 1000 participants (in 13 schools and 6 social care settings) giving 25 performances to an audience of over 8000 people.

Bath Philharmonia brings the live orchestral experience locally. We celebrate the talent of some of the world's greatest musicians and have developed friendships with soloists including Nicola Benedetti, Sheku Kanneh Mason, Jess Gillam, Steven Isserlis, Peter Donohoe and Steven Hough. As a flexibly sized orchestra, we introduce a diverse orchestral repertoire to our audiences.

In our Season prior to Covid-19, Bath Philharmonia performed 20 concerts to over 12,000 people and reached many more through broadcasts and recordings. Our developing discography was recorded at Abbey Road and Real World Studios with works by contemporary British composers including Paul Carr, Steven Faux, Judith Bailey and George Lloyd.



BATH PHILHARMONIA

Players' List

FIRST VIOLIN

Leader: Sophie Langdon
 Rosemary Wainwright
 Peter Fisher
 Matthew Everett
 Gisele Boll
 Vladimir Naumov

SECOND VIOLIN

Pr: Declan Daly
 Kerry Vaughan
 Lisa Betteridge
 Katy Rowe

VIOLA

Pr: Reiad Chibah
 Rachel Calaminus
 Wei Wei Tan

CELLO

Pr: Miriam Lowbury
 Emily Isaac
 Jonathan Few

DOUBLE BASS

Pr: Martin Henderson

PERCUSSION

Elsa Bradley

HARP

Eluned Pierce

KEYBOARD

Zeynep Ozsucu

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