

# Melrose Music Society

SCOTTISH CHARITY NO. SC005891

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2026, 3pm

## The Bute Wind Quintet – Celebrating György Kurtág's 100th Birthday



Sam Willsmore, oboe      Nathan Barker, French horn  
 Gabriella Alberti, flute      Hannah Harding, bassoon      Meg Davies, clarinet

György Ligeti  
 György Kurtág  
 Luciano Berio  
 Pēteris Vasks

Six Bagatelles  
 Wind Quintet Op. 2  
 Opus Number Zoo  
 Music for Fleeting Birds

Interval

Jacques Ibert  
 Johan Kvandal  
 Malcolm Arnold  
 James MacMillan  
 Valerie Coleman

Trois Pièces Brèves  
 Wind Quintet Op. 34  
 Three Shanties  
 Untold  
 Tzigane

### **György Ligeti (1923-2006) - *Six Bagatelles***

*allegro con spirito - rubato. lamentoso - allegro grazioso - presto ruvido - adagio. mesto (Béla Bartók in memoriam) - molto vivace. capriccioso*

Arranged by Ligeti from his solo piano collection *Musica Ricercata* written in 1951-2, each short Bagatelle crystallises round a fertile little seed – in the first, the interval of a minor third and a chirpy rhythmic figure; in the second, a sinister group built round a semitone, used melodically and harmonically. The third piece has an arpeggio figure on clarinet and bassoon supporting a long flute melody which other instruments take over in turn, either singly or in pairs. The exhilarating fourth movement is in 7/8 and exploits the various rhythmic groupings available: every note carries an accent.

The fifth Bagatelle is inscribed to the memory of Béla Bartók and begins and ends with Bartókian night music, with a more forceful short middle section. The capricious sixth movement is extremely fast, with a constantly changing time signature. The melodic idea rises and falls in thirds. Near the end the music is marked "ecstatic, as though insane", before a final distant horn descent in thirds. Written while Ligeti was living under the oppressive, culturally restrictive Soviet regime in Hungary, the final movement was banned at the work's premiere in 1956, the wild, boisterous dissonances considered too "dangerous" and cosmopolitan for the public.

### **György Kurtág (born 1926) - *Wind Quintet, Op. 2***

*lento - agitato - vivo - molto sostenuto - rubato, improvvisando - grave, ma con slancio - mesto - rubato, molto agitato*

Composed in 1959, this is a concise eight-movement masterpiece influenced by Webern and Messiaen. The original handwritten manuscript of this early work by Kurtág was presumed missing until rediscovery in the archives of the Kodaly Institute. The work unfolds in eight extremely short, interconnected miniatures, with some movements flashing by in a matter of seconds. Instead of lengthy, lyrical melodies, the composer explores highly fragmented, isolated gestures: whirs, jabs, and microtonal inflections bounce rapidly between the five instruments. The motifs feel restless and unpredictable, paying homage to Messiaen's concept of rhythmic cells. Kurtág uses the contrasting textures of the quintet's differing timbres to create a wide spectrum of colours within his miniatures. The silence between the notes is as important as the notes themselves, allowing each player's phrase to land with equal weight. Kurtág turned 100 on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026.



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### **Luciano Berio (1925-2003) - *Opus Number Zoo***

In the composer's distinct brand of musical theatre and neo-classicism, this playful work blends music and storytelling, requiring the instrumentalists to not only play their instruments but also recite allegorical animal fables in four short, highly distinct sections. *Barn Dance* is a lively, rhythmic, and angular dance that sets a bustling, rustic scene. *The Fawn* relies on lyrical and suspended melodies to portray the quiet, grazing deer. *The Grey Mouse* is frantic, scurrying and darting, using the distinct textures of the instruments to mimic a mouse running. *Tom Cats* is a miniature musical cartoon in which the performers intersperse playing with aggressive or comical whispering or speaking to represent a catfight.

### **Pēteris Vasks (born 1946) - *Music for Fleeting Birds***

Reflecting the composer's interest in nature, Vasks' use of the imagery of birds in this work has a double meaning. Composed in 1977, birdsong serves as a code for the uninhibited freedom of migratory birds in contrast to the then restrictive Soviet regime in Latvia, while also connecting to Vasks' concern for the fragile ecology of his homeland. Freely notated, improvisational passages that allow the woodwinds to freely imitate the natural, onomatopoeic calls of birds are contrasted with structured chordal passages with sharply accentuated, rhythmic sections.



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**Jacques Ibert (1890-1962) - *Trois Pièces Brèves***

*allegro - andante - assez lent: scherzando*

Originally written in 1930 as incidental music for George Farquhar's play *The Beaux' Stratagem*, this suite is witty and colourful, offering an effortless blend of 1930s Parisian charm and theatrical flair. Born in Paris, Ibert was celebrated for his eclectic, spirited approach to composition. He believed music did not always have to be deeply serious and possessed a talent for vibrant instrumentation and gentle humour.

### **Johan Kvandal (1919-1999) - *Wind Quintet Op. 34***

*preludium: largo - presto; adagio ma non troppo; allegro assai; finale*

After studying composition in Oslo and with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, Kvandal developed a unique musical language that synthesised international contemporary music with traditional Norwegian folk elements. Composed in 1971, the *Wind Quintet* begins in melancholic mood before a build-up of tension, with dramatic climaxes that are not resolved until the finale with its bright major chords.

### **Malcolm Arnold (1921-2006) - *Three Shanties***

*allegro con brio - allegretto semplice - allegro vivace*

These shanties date back to 1943 and were written for some colleagues in the London Philharmonic Orchestra to play on wartime tours. This explains why the first performance was given at Filton Aerodrome, near Bristol. The work as a whole is a piece of pure entertainment based on three well-known tunes. The first, *What shall we do with the drunken sailor?*, is full of rhythmic distortions and lively syncopation. The attentive listener may well notice the sailor's drunken hiccups! At one stage the jolly theme is converted to a tango. *Boney was a warrior* is the theme chosen for the second movement and contrasts well with the mood of both outer movements. Arnold plays it here as a simple and melancholy theme, which is repeated six times by various instruments over a very light accompaniment. The oboist has merely a few sparse notes of harmony. *Johnny come down to Hilo* is the tune for the final *allegro vivace* and receives a similar treatment to that for the tune in the opening movement. A lively rumba can be heard here as one of the rhythmic variations.

### **James MacMillan (born 1959) - *Untold***

In the composer's own words: 'Untold was commissioned by the Ayr Arts Guild for the Flaxton Ensemble who gave the premiere in 1987. It is a short, slow movement for wind quintet but using a cor anglais instead of an oboe. Its mood is lyrical and expressive, the material being loosely based on an Irish love-song: *For Ireland I'll not tell her Name*. The piece is dedicated to my young nephew Sean.'

### **Valerie Coleman (born 1970) - *Tzigane***

A Grammy-nominated American flutist and composer, Coleman was the 2020 *Performance Today* Classical Woman of the Year. *Tzigane* is a high-octane, passionate work inspired by Ravel's piece of the same name. It was composed in 2011 following Coleman's work on *ROMA*, a larger ensemble piece celebrating Romani culture.

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**The Bute Wind Quintet** was formed in 2022, originally for a recording of Malcolm Arnold's Four Welsh Dances as part of the International Malcolm Arnold Online Festival. Their name comes from Cardiff's Bute Park, overlooked by the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD) where each member of the group studied. The Quintet are two-time winners of the June Emerson Wind Music Launchpad Prize. They have performed for music festivals such as Lichfield, Beaumaris, Cowbridge and Fishguard Music. Notable performances include London's Conway Hall, and St George's Bristol for the Royal Society of Musicians. They have just completed a two-year Artists Residency at the Norwegian Church Arts Centre. They all play with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Welsh National Opera and other orchestras around the UK. **Sam Willsmore** is an oboist originally from Southend-on-Sea. He is an alumnus of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and RWCMD, where he graduated with distinction and was awarded the Ernest and Doris Haigh Memorial Award in association with the Musicians' Union. **James Barker** is a horn player from East Fife in Scotland. He began playing horn aged eight and played with the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland and other youth orchestras across the country before going on to study at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Junior

Academy before undertaking his undergraduate studies at RWCMD. **Gabriella Alberti**, a flautist originally from Melbourne, Australia, has worked with Welsh National Opera, BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Cardiff Concert Orchestra. She graduated with distinction in Orchestral Masters from RWCMD, with funding by the Ian Potter Cultural Trust. She has played Principal Flute with Brent Opera, Opera on Location, British Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, Cardiff Chamber Orchestra, Ballet Cymru and Orchestra de Cymru. **Hannah Harding** is a bassoonist based in London. She recently completed the fellowship year with Sinfonia Smith Square (formerly Southbank Sinfonia) where she enjoyed varied weekly performances at Smith Square Hall and venues across London and the UK, including Royal Festival Hall, Snape Maltings, the Royal Opera House, and the Royal Albert Hall. **Meg Davies** began playing the clarinet at the age of seven, studying at Northamptonshire Music and Performing Arts Trust before attending RWCMD, graduating with first-class honours and returning to graduate with an MMus in Orchestral Performance. Meg won the 2024 RWCMD Concerto Competition with William Mathias' Clarinet Concerto. Meg has played with Welsh National Opera and English Symphony Orchestra.

### Our Next Concerts

#### **Sunday, July 19<sup>th</sup> at 3pm – Simon Callaghan, Piano**

One of the leading pianists of his generation, Simon Callaghan has recorded more than fifty CDs and performed in many of the major concert halls around the world. In Melrose, he will play two extraordinary pieces from 1908 by young English composers, both of which he has recorded to unanimous critical acclaim. Rebecca Clarke's Theme and Variations, with its Schubertian grace and charm, established her as an emerging talent in those unhappily chauvinistic times. Cyril Scott's astonishingly original first sonata so impressed Stravinsky that he incorporated its rhythmic motifs into The Rite of Spring. Simon's recital ends with arguably the most profound and moving sonata ever written, Schubert's last, completed just weeks before his death.

#### **Sunday, Aug. 16<sup>th</sup> at 3:00pm –**

#### **Maria Waszyrowska, soprano & Harris Playfair, piano**

This recital, exploring links between Europe and Broadway, begins our celebration of Bruno Walter. Weill was another refugee who achieved fame in America; Gershwin sought classical respectability; Rodgers mimicked Viennese operetta. Maria, accompanied by the majestically versatile Harris, will also sing songs from her native Poland, and two of Tchaikovsky's most delightful melodies.

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