

Melrose Music Society

SCOTTISH CHARITY NO. SC005891

Sunday, 26th October 2025, 3pm

Joshua Hayward, viola



From Darkness to Light

Johann Sebastian Bach: *Suite No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1008*

Luciano Berio: *Sequenza VI*

Interval

György Kurtág: *Doloroso*

Thea Musgrave: *Light at the End of the Tunnel*

Sally Beamish: *Penillion*

Johann Sebastian Bach: *Suite No. 6 in D major, BWV 1012*

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) – *Suite No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1008*

Prélude Allemande Courante Sarabande Menuet I & II Gigue

It is not known when, why or for whom Bach's suites were composed, what bowings and articulations, nor even for which instruments they were intended. Most historians assume, without that much evidence, that Bach composed them alongside or immediately after the six sonatas and partitas for solo violin in the 1720s in Cöthen, but they might well predate that period or have been written at different times for different players and instruments. "Violoncello" could refer to the modern model created by Stradivarius in the early 18th century; older, larger ones; or to the *violoncello da spalla* (AKA *viola da spalla*), which was slung over the shoulder and played like a violin: the sixth suits such an instrument best, though the original score requires a fifth string. The Suites have a *prélude* followed by five dances, four of which are common to each suite: the *allemande* (a moderately-paced German dance in duple or 4/4 time), the *courante* (a fast French dance with a mixture of triple and duple rhythms), the *sarabande* (a majestic, slow dance in triple time, Spanish in origin, typically with an accent on the second beat of each bar), and the *gigue* (a quick, light-footed rustic dance of British origin in triple time). Between the slow *sarabande* and quick *gigue*, a pair of moderate tempo *menuets*, *bourrées*, or *gavottes* act as a bridge.

Like most of Bach's music for solo instruments, none of the six were performed in public in the C19th: individual movements were used at conservatoires as practice pieces, the set published as "*études*". In 1890, the thirteen-year-old Pablo Casals bought a copy from a second-hand shop in Barcelona. Playing them literally every day and realising they were masterpieces, he showcased them in a concert in 1901. His pioneering recordings, made on 78s between 1936 and 1939, had an impact comparable to Glen Gould's LP of *The Goldberg Variations* twenty years later. In the early 1940s, Casals' friend and colleague, Lillian Fuchs – arguably the greatest violist of the last century – played the 6th Suite for Casals, who said simply, "it sounds better on the viola". Fuchs then transcribed the 2nd, performing it in public in April 1947. A Decca executive in the audience proposed that she record all six suites, which she did to great acclaim in the early 1950s. Suites 2 and 6, therefore, have a particular significance in the development of viola repertoire.

D minor is often described as the key of despair and melancholy, and the 2nd Suite is definitely sombre. The *prélude* opens hesitantly as if feeling its way in the darkness, but gradually relaxes. The *allemande* is particularly plaintive with heavy chords, while the *courante* is very energetic, even furious. The famous *sarabande* is often played as a stand-alone piece: a mournful, pleading lament within a very narrow range. It is followed by two linked but contrasting *minuets*; the first complex with many double and triple stops, the second disarmingly and delightfully simple. This is mirrored in the two-part *gigue*, which begins with cheerful energy but ends in something as close to anguish as you find in Bach's oeuvre.

Luciano Berio (1925-2003) – *Sequenza VI*

We celebrate the centenary of great Italian composer's birth with this performance of *Sequenza VI*, written in 1967 for the French violist Serge Collot. It defies the viola's genteel, pastoral image, with flamenco-style aggression, alleviated only sporadically by short melodic fragments, like reminiscences of calmer times. Berio describes it as "a piece of great virtuosity (a very indirect homage to Paganini's *Capricci*) where the same basic harmonic sequence is continuously repeated, developed and transformed. It is a formal study on repetition, on the relationship between often repeated modules and modules appearing only once." This does little to indicate the visceral dramatic impact of the work, which begins with furiously bowed multi-stops that articulate the harmonic fields permeating the entire piece.

György Kurtág (born 1926) – *Doloroso*

Berio and his friend Kurtág were close contemporaries born only a few months apart, which means we will celebrate the Hungarian's 100 birthday very soon. Most of his musical output consists of fascinating, evocative miniatures of which this, composed in 1992, is typical. Sometimes his titles are playful and enigmatic, but not in this case.

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Thea Musgrave (born 1928) – *Light at the End of the Tunnel*

This piece was composed specially for Joshua during lockdown in August 2020, and premiered by him on BBC Radio 3. Her notes seem more poignant with each passing month as war, genocide, inequality and inhumanity continue as normal:

‘Today nobody knows how long the “tunnel” of the pandemic, Covid-19, will be. All that is certain is that one day we will reach that “light” at the end of the tunnel and that “normal” times will resume. But what will that “normal” be? No way to know. We can only hope that somehow, we will all work together so that we will emerge into a warmer and clearer light where there will be true justice and, above all, peace.

So, in the music the solo viola reacts to the journey through life during this terrifying worldwide 2020 pandemic with despair and agitation. His several outbursts are interrupted by a quiet long-held his E natural which of course represents the “light at the end of the tunnel”. Eventually the viola realizes that this light is indeed there and one day will be reachable. His agitation calms as he resolves this E natural to A major. The future is this one of hope, though there are many things that will have to be fought for.’



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Sally Beamish (born 1956) – *Penillion*

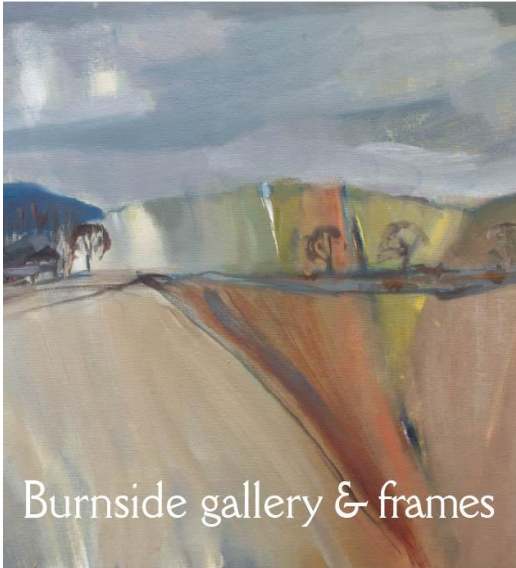
Penillion was commissioned by Heather Gibbard and dedicated to her niece, the viola player Rebecca Mair Jones on the occasion of her 18th birthday in July 1998. Beamish explains, “*Penillion* is a form of extemporized singing known only in Wales. The singer improvises a sort of counterpoint while a harpist plays several stanzas of a well-known melody. The singer only states the melody at the end. I have adapted this idea to make a set of variations on the Welsh tune Gwenllian’s Repose; incorporating, as well as the idea of singing, imagined sounds of the *crwth* – an ancient Welsh fiddle, now extinct.” Like the Musgrave piece, it is a representation of human endurance. Here is one verse from the ancient song: “She lingered pining long, long years, ‘Come back, my only love to me. Come back my only love, Come back my love, to me.’ None knew her many bitter tears She shed for one loved faithfully. At rest now from her hopes and fears She sleeps beneath the willow tree. ‘My love, I live or die, I live or die for thee!’”

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) – *Suite No. 6 in D major, BWV 1012*

Prélude Allemande Courante Sarabande Gavotte I & II Gigue

The final Bach suite is significantly longer than any of the other five, and arguably more expressive because freer, with many virtuosic cadenza-like passages, beginning with the long, grand *prélude*, which features exciting 16th note runs. The *courante* is a bright, lively expanded variation on the one from the first suite. The contrasting *allemande* is pensive and uncertain, but short, as though such doubts should not linger but be banished by the exuberance to come. First, though, the meditative *sarabande*, in 3/2 rather than 3/4 time, brings calm, with harmonically rich chords. Then the energy picks up with the lively, melodic *gavottes*, the second especially invigorating in its folksy simplicity. The *gigue* is, indeed, a sublimely merry jig of dazzling sophistication and sincere joy. Somehow, the human spirit *will* keep shining through, expressed in and sustained by such glorious music.

Joshua Hayward, winner of the Louis Watt Solo Prize and an award from the Countess of Munster Musical Trust, has made concerto performances at the London Barbican and as part of the Orpheus and Bacchus Music Festival in France, as well as giving many solo recitals in the UK. A violist with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, he has performed also with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Ulster Orchestra and has featured as a Section Principal with the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, Orchestra O’Modern, Shadwell Opera, and the Constella Orchestra. His chamber music experience includes appearing as a guest musician with the Sacconi, Dante and Chilingirian Quartets alongside a number of performances with Ensemble 360 and Explore Ensemble. As a member of the Marmen Quartet from 2013-2017 he won Music in the Round’s first ever ‘Bridge’ Scheme for String Quartet, and was awarded the Artist Diploma at the Royal College of Music, the Associate Ensemble at Birmingham Conservatoire, Ensemble in residence at the Malmo Palladium and the Royal Philharmonic Society’s Albert and Eugenie Frost Music Prize.



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Our Next Concert

Sunday November 16th 3pm – Robert Creimerman, piano

The charismatic Romanian pianist plays an exciting mix of masterpieces: from Beethoven's youthful variations, his first significant work for the piano in his signature key of C minor, to poignant late Brahms; from tempestuous early Prokofiev to dazzling fireworks from Debussy; his recital will end magnificently with Liszt's sublime sonata.

Ludwig van Beethoven:

32 Variations in C minor

Johannes Brahms:

6 Klavierstücke, Op.118

Sergei Prokofiev:

Sonata no. 3 in A minor, op. 28

Claude Debussy:

Prélude Feux d'artifice

Franz Liszt:

Piano sonata in B minor, S. 178

Viols Before Bach

Friday, January 23rd – The Intesa Duo: Bass Viols and Voice

We are grateful to the Tunnell Trust for facilitating this recital by two new stars of early music. Lucine Musaelian and Nathan Giorgetti will perform some pieces dating back more than a thousand years. Their programme is inspired by the Venetian island, San Lazzaro degli Armeni, where the monks of the Mekhitarist monastery preserved and disseminated Armenian, Latin, and Italian music. The duo will feature works by Grigor Narekatsi (c. 950-1007), Nerses Shnorhali (1102-1173), Adrian Willaert (c. 1490–1562), Orlando di Lasso (1532-1594), Giulio Caccini (1551-1618), Luca Marenzio (1556-1599), Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643), Tobias Hume (1569-1645), Alfonso Ferrabosco II (1575-1628), Michael East (c. 1580-1648), Francesca Caccini (1587-1640), Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677) and Marin Marais (1656-1728).



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Happy Birthday György!

Sunday, April 26th 3pm - Alina Horvath, Piano

In celebration of György Kurtág's 100th birthday, his compatriot will juxtapose the Hungarian composer's homages and extrapolations with the classics that inspired them. This recital, therefore, presents an enchantingly varied sample of beautiful and thrilling masterpieces and scintillating miniatures.

- Domenico Scarlatti: *Sonata in D major K. 119*
György Kurtág: *Hommage à Domenico Scarlatti,*
Eight Piano Pieces, Op. 3
W.A. Mozart: *Sonata in G major KV 283. No. 5*
György Kurtág: *Szálkák, Op. 6d*
Franz Liszt: *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 16 in A minor*
György Kurtág: *... feuilles mortes ...*
Joseph Haydn: *Sonata in E minor Hob.XVI:34*
György Kurtág: *Perpetuum mobile (objet trouvé)*
Claude Debussy: *Pour le Piano*
György Kurtág: *couple égyptien en route vers l'inconnu*

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