

Melrose Music Society

SCOTTISH CHARITY NO. SC005891

Sunday 16th August 2026, 3pm

Maria Waszyrowska, Soprano and Harris Playfair, Piano



George Gershwin – *Someone to Watch Over Me*

Fryderyk Chopin – *Selected Songs: Życzenie; Wiosna; Posel; Śliczny Chłopiec*

Johnny Green – *Body and Soul*

Karol Szymanowski – *Kurpian Songs (Lecioły zórazie; Wysła burzycka; Uwoz mamó; U jeziorocka; A pod borem siwe kunie)*

Interval

Richard Rodgers – *It Might as Well Be Spring*

Pyotr Tchaikovsky – *Twas in the Early Spring; At the Ball*

George Gershwin – *They Can't Take That Away from Me*

Eden Ahbez – *Nature Boy*

Bruno Walter – *Die Lerche; Des Kindes Schlaf; Die Elfe*

Richard Rodgers – *Edelweiss*

Kurt Weill – *It Never Was You*

George Gershwin (1898-1937) - *Someone to Watch Over Me*

Among the fame of timeless pieces such as *Rhapsody in Blue* and *An American in Paris*, Gershwin wrote over 1000 songs, many of which have become standards in the popular repertoire. *Someone to Watch Over Me* comes from the 1926 show *Oh, Kay!* with lyrics by Gershwin's brother Ira, and was originally sung by Gertrude Lawrence in its Broadway premiere.

Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849) – Selected Songs

Życzenie; Wiosna; Posel; Śliczny Chłopiec

Chopin, whilst mostly known for his vast repertoire of piano compositions, also wrote a total of 19 songs for voice and piano. They combine folk melodies with Polish national dances, with the addition of carefully crafted lyrics by Poland's most notable romantic writers. They present the listener with a captivating simplicity, drawing you in with their repetitiveness and lyricism.

Johnny Green (1908-1989) - *Body and Soul*

Like *Someone to Watch Over Me*, *Body and Soul* was originally written for the English actress Gertrude Lawrence, and later popularised by Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra, as well as saxophonist Coleman Hawkins.

Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937) – Kurpian Songs

*Lecioły zórazie; Wysła burzycka; Uwoz Mamo Roz; U Jeziorecka;
A pod Borem Siwe Kunie*

Inspired by the folk songs of the Kurpie region in north-central and north-eastern Poland, Szymanowski wrote 12 songs for solo voice and piano, as well as 6 songs for an *a cappella* choir. The songs keep to the original melodies and dialect, pairing those with the eerie, melancholic and enticing harmonisation of the 20th century. Expressed through the music and lyrics are themes of nature, longing, love and heartbreak, where each song expresses its own unique personality, and the piano often plays its own character in the story.



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Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) – *It Might as Well Be Spring*

A collaboration between Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, this song was written for the 1945 musical film *State Fair*, winning an Academy Award for Best Original Song.

Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) – *Twas in the Early Spring* (op.38 no.2); *At the Ball* (op.38 no.3)

In 1878, shortly after composing the opera *Eugene Onegin*, Tchaikovsky, the composer of some of the most beautiful romantic music ever written, published yet another song collection – *Six Romances*, op.38. *Twas in the Early Spring* is a poem by Aleksei Tolstoy which, set to music, paints a beautiful picture of a nostalgic spring afternoon and the awakening of young love. *At the Ball* – a waltz mimicking that in Tolstoy's poem – depicts a gentleman who gazes across a busy dance floor and instantly falls in love. Its minor tonality, with brief ventures into major tonalities, create a mysterious landscape.

George Gershwin (1898-1937) – *They Can't Take That Away from Me*

Another composition of the Gershwin brothers, this song was introduced by Fred Astaire in the 1937 film *Shall we Dance*, sung on the foggy deck of a ferry from New Jersey to Manhattan, while Ginger Rogers just looked on in admiration.

Eden Ahbez (1908-1995) – *Nature Boy*

The song was first recorded by the outstanding American jazz singer Nat King Cole, and therefore is mostly associated with him. The haunting melody and the rubato tempo, along with the profound meaning, make the song even more thought provoking.



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Bruno Walter (1876-1962) – *Die Lerche; Des Kindes Schlaf; Die Elfe*

Bruno Walter is primarily known as an extraordinary conductor of the 20th century. He is widely recognised as the protégé of Gustav Mahler, notably conducting the posthumous premieres of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (1911) and *Symphony No. 9* (1912). No doubt taking inspiration from Mahler and the great Viennese composers, Walter wrote his own music, including a symphony, pieces of chamber music and Lieder. These three come from *Six Lieder*, op.12.

Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) – *Edelweiss*

The famous song from *The Sound of Music* uses the imagery of a small Alpine flower as a symbol of patriotism and resistance, just as the Von Trapp family are about to flee to Switzerland.

Kurt Weill (1900-1950) – *It Never Was You*

This extremely nostalgic and romantic song comes from Weill's musical *Knickerbocker Holiday* in which, originally in a duet, a pair of lovers celebrate their deeply emotional reunion.

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Maria Waszyrowska was born in Łódź, Poland and moved to Scotland with her family at the age of 13. Although she originally started as a pianist at the age of 10, she quickly swapped to voice and discovered her real passion. She studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland under the tutelage of opera singer, Christina Dunwoodie, graduating with a First-Class Honours Degree in Music Education with a commendation as a First Study singer.

For seven years, Maria was part of the National Youth Choir of Scotland, performing in renowned venues such as Carnegie Hall, Philharmonie de Paris and Usher Hall, as well as the live broadcast of King Charles III's Scottish coronation in St Giles. Recent concert highlights include soprano solos in Handel's *Messiah* with Berwick Arts Choir. She continues developing her skills under the tutelage of prof. Janice Chapman in London, and through attending masterclass programs in Poland and London.

Maria is currently a music teacher at Berwickshire High School in Duns and can be heard as a soloist in various local concerts and performances. She often collaborates with pianist Harris Playfair and is delighted to be able to perform for Melrose Music Society again.

Starting his musical education at St. Mary's Music School aged thirteen, **Harris Playfair** went on to study at the RSAMD and RNCM, winning many prizes and awards, most notably a PGDip and a PPRNCM with distinction from Manchester. Two years on cruise ships completed his performance training. He has gone on to spend over forty years performing both locally and nationally, as well as pursuing many avenues of music education, including as a High School teacher in the Scottish Borders. He taught at Newcastle University, was accompanist for the BBC "Young Trad Musician of the Year" for eight years and was also a regular examiner at the Scottish Conservatoire. Between 2006 and 2011 he directed several "Youth Trad Big Bands" at summer music camps both in Scotland and in Canada.

Harris retired from Secondary teaching at the start of 2023, but has since been as busy as ever, performing regularly with his long-standing duo partner, Shetland fiddler Jenna Reid, and with the Scottish Blend Trio. He curates monthly concerts at the Kirk in his home village of Fogo.

Upcoming classical events include concerts with the Aquillos Wind Quintet – locally at St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh this month.

Our Next Concerts

Sunday, September 6th at 3pm **Boglárka György, violin & Amy Butler, piano**

The duo that played Beethoven's "Spring" so memorably in 2024 return with his passionate "Kreutzer", the model and inspiration for Walter's neglected but beautiful sonata. Boglárka and Amy also play melodious works by the two composers Walter most admired. He made the first commercial recording of Mahler's *Symphony No.5* with NYPO in 1947: its poignant Adagietto sounds wonderful as a delicate duet. Mozart's K301 is his first masterpiece in the genre, famous for its lilting waltz finale.

Sunday, September 27th at 3pm **Duo B!z'art, piano four-hands**

Our celebration of Bruno Walter reaches a climax with his transcription of Mahler's *Symphony No 1*, played by André Roe and Geoffrey Baptiste who have become one of the top piano duos in Europe. Leonard Bernstein was Walter's assistant at the NYPO, making his sensational debut at Carnegie Hall in 1943 when the Austrian was ill. His friend John Corigliano's Gazebo Dances are exhilarating foot-tappers. *Strange and Solemn Music* by Scotland's John Hearne is as moody and evocative as its Shakespearean title suggests.

Please volunteer - although we have been putting on concerts of the highest musical calibre since the early 1960s, we remain a very small operation relying entirely on a few volunteers to organise and manage our activities. If you think you might be able to help in any way by, for example, transporting musicians to and/or from local stations, serving refreshments during the interval, creating publicity materials, putting up posters around the Borders, please, do contact us.

Website – www.melrosemusicsociety.org.uk

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Tickets - www.ticketebo.co.uk/melrose-music-society

Please donate - our ticket prices are affordable because we believe great music should be accessible to anyone regardless of income. If you can afford more, please, give a little extra. All donations are greatly appreciated. Equally, while we wish you a long, healthy life, a bequest, however small, would help the Society to keep organising concerts into the future.

We thank Creative Scotland, through Chamber Music Scotland, for their invaluable financial help. We are founder members of the Scottish Consortium of Music Societies.

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