

scottish
ensemble



MOZART BY NUMBERS

CONCERT PROGRAMME

Fri 25 May	Theatre Royal, Dumfries
Tue 29 May	Eden Court, Inverness
Wed 30 May	Caird Hall, Dundee
Thu 31 May	Glasgow Royal Concert Halls
Fri 1 June	The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

THE PERFORMERS

Scottish Ensemble

<i>Leader</i>	Jonathan Morton
<i>Violin</i>	Cheryl Crockett, Liza Johnson, Paula Smart
<i>Violin</i>	Daniel Pioro, Joanne Green, George Smith
<i>Viola</i>	Jane Atkins, Andrew Berridge
<i>Cello</i>	Alison Lawrance, Naomi Pavri
<i>Double Bass</i>	Diane Clark

Guests

<i>Oboe</i>	Rosie Staniforth, Mary James
<i>Horn</i>	Alec Frank-Gemmill, Harry Johnstone

THE PROGRAMME

In manus tuas

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)
Daniel Pioro

String Duo No.1 in G major, K.423

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)
Movement I - Allegro
Jonathan Morton, Jane Atkins

Sister

Edmund Finnis (b.1984)
Daniel Pioro, Naomi Pavri

Divertimento in E flat major, K.563

W. A. Mozart
Movement II - Adagio
Jonathan Morton, Jane Atkins, Alison Lawrance

The King's Alchemist

Sally Beamish (b.1956)
Movement I - Cantus
Daniel Pioro, Andrew Berridge, Naomi Pavri

String Quartet No. 18 in A major, K.464

W. A. Mozart
Movement III - Andante
Jonathan Morton, Cheryl Crockett, Jane Atkins, Alison Lawrance

6 Moments Musicaux, Op.44

György Kurtág (b.1926)
Movement V - Rappel des oiseaux
Daniel Pioro, Liza Johnson, Andrew Berridge, Naomi Pavri

String Quintet No. 4 in G minor, K.516

W. A. Mozart
Movement IV - Adagio
Jonathan Morton, Cheryl Crockett, Jane Atkins, Andrew Berridge, Alison Lawrance

interval (approx. 20 mins)

Divertimento No.15 in B flat major, K.287

W. A. Mozart
Movement V - Menuetto – Trio
Jonathan Morton, Joanne Green, Jane Atkins, Alison Lawrance, Diane Clark, Alec Frank-Gemmill, Harry Johnstone

Divertimento No. 17 in D major, K.334

W. A. Mozart
Movement I - Allegro
Jonathan Morton, Joanne Green, Jane Atkins, Alison Lawrance, Diane Clark, Alec Frank-Gemmill, Harry Johnstone

Symphony No. 29 in A major, K. 201/186a

W. A. Mozart
All movements! Everyone!

Programme information correct at time of printing. Any changes to programme order will be announced from the stage.

INTRODUCING MOZART (BY NUMBERS)

Tonight's concert is built around a selection of pieces by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, one of the most prolific composers ever known. The works we've chosen date from 1774 (his Symphony in A major, written when he was 18) to 1788 (the Divertimento in E flat major, written at the age of 32). Considering the composer died just a few weeks before his 36th birthday, the range you'll hear represents a significant portion of his working life – but then, for an artist whose compositional career began at the age of eight, the phrase 'working life' feels a little redundant.

This legend of Mozart-as-child-prodigy is endlessly appealing. It was then, and it is now; across the centuries our fawning admiration of unquantifiable talent, our greed for celebrity, has not eased, simply changed its format. In fact, Mozart's story is so appealing that it has achieved the ultimate badge of true fame – backlash, in the form of books, essays, documentaries, talks. Was he really a genius? Is anyone, or is there only hard work? Are the facts even correct?

His story has been teased and plumped so many times – the terrifying father, the irresponsible spending, the sinister arch-enemy – that the truth is almost bound to be more disappointing than the impression given in the entertaining films and theatre productions. And yet, some key facts, understood as true by historians, remain. Days before his fifth birthday, a young Wolfgang opened a notebook containing a piece of music his father, the musician and composer Leopold Mozart, had written out. 30 minutes later, he'd learnt to play it (and well). At the age of seven, he was being whisked across Europe, performing to dukes, barons and bursting concert halls, even playing the organ with astonishing prowess after being merely shown the pedals by his father. "Everyone was amazed. It's another gift from God — the type many people are bestowed with only after hard work," Leopold wrote in a letter. In 1764, just 8 years old, he published his first piece, a violin sonata. By the summer of that year he'd written and published his *first symphony*. By the age of twelve came his *first opera*. By the time he turned fifteen, he'd written *over a hundred pieces*.

Forgive the italics, but amidst the myths and the plumping and the glamorising and the disproving, it's easy to overlook the cold, hard truth that when we talk of Mozart, or when we listen to or play one of his pieces, we are dealing with someone who would be considered extraordinary in any time or any society. Even if we consider his creations to be 'merely' the result of sheer hard work and dedication – days spent stuffed indoors, rather than playing outside with his fellow children – the sheer number of pieces he produced, pieces of high quality, skill and aesthetic loveliness, is still something to be marvelled at.

There's also the fact that however much the stories become jumbled in our minds, this idea of Mozart's equally-tangled personality remains unchallenged, and it's this that is really the most tantalising legacy of the lot. It marries with our experience of his music and enhances it. As his letters reveal, the exaggerated public figure of juvenile pranks, of carefree arrogance in the face of an elite which was paying his wages, of committed party-going, was also a private figure – one who felt deeply, thought deeply, grieved deeply. All of this is in his music; a portrait of genius, fragmented into over 600 works.

Tonight's exploration focuses on the quite incredible range of Mozart's output. Beginning with a string duo for viola and violin, musicians will gradually join the stage until we have enough for a symphony. It's one he wrote in Salzburg, during the prolific period when he was employed by the Viennese court. The 29th out of a total of 41 he would go on to compose (and that's just the official number; there were other unnumbered ones), it stands out as a work full of spirit, spark and zest for life, radiating the character of the composer at this time. Or, as musicologist Stanley Sadie states, "a landmark...personal in tone, indeed perhaps more individual in its combination of an intimate, chamber music style with a fiery and impulsive manner."

NOTES ON THE CONCERT

In manus tuas (2009)

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

This intimate nine-minute piece was composed for a very particular situation: the cellist Hannah Collins, performing in a dark nave of Christ Church in New Haven, Connecticut, lit only by the flickering of candles, as part of a secular 'compline' (or night prayer) service. It's a service intended to provide a period of quietness and reflection before resting at the end of the day, and as such the ending is particularly important; it should be without addition, conversation or noise. If the service is in church, for example, those present depart in silence.

Wherever it's heard, a feeling of solitary, personal meditation as well as religiosity echoes through this ethereal piece, performed tonight in its arrangement for solo violin. Based on a 16th-century motet by Thomas Tallis, there are only a few slices of the piece that still reflect the exact harmonic changes in Tallis' original work; it is instead intended to capture, according to Shaw, "the sensation of the single moment of hearing this motet in this particular and remarkable space". She was also particular in terms of directing the playing, asking the musician to dig into the strings, producing a haunting, almost moaning sound which is broken occasionally by clear, singing notes. Scattered across a sparse landscape, the influence of Tallis morphs almost into a solo Bach partita, fragmented and searching.

Manhattan-based Caroline Shaw is a violinist, vocalist and composer who, in 2013, became the youngest ever winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2013 with her enigmatic *Partita for 8 Voices* (she also went on to win a Grammy as a member of much-lauded experimental vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth). An eclectic list of achievements and accolades includes performing on Arcade Fire member Richard Reed Parry's album *Music for Heart and Breath*, and opening for Kanye West at a Democratic Committee fundraiser.

String Duo No.1 in G major, K.423 (1783)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

1 Allegro

See p.3 for programme note on all Mozart works.

Sister (2012)

Edmund Finnis (b.1984)

Written on an August day in Massachusetts, this soft, fragile conversation between violin and cello was inspired by reflections of light and water. The voices move in parallel, exchange lines, merge, then slip off-kilter with one another, making patterns out of the instruments' natural harmonics and resonant open strings.

Award-winning composer Edmund Finnis creates delicate, nuanced, carefully-textured works. Commissioned by groups across the UK and internationally, he also enjoys close associations with both the London Sinfonietta and London Contemporary Orchestra.

Divertimento in E flat major, K.563 (1788)

W. A. Mozart

2 Adagio

The King's Alchemist (2013)

Sally Beamish (b.1956)

1 Cantus

In 2013, I wrote a piece commemorating the tragic Battle of Flodden Field in 1513. The subject was dark, and the resulting music an outcry against the devastation of war. However, whilst researching the work, I visited Stirling Castle, home of James IV. At the castle, I gained a vivid picture of a young king who was highly cultured, with a passionate commitment to his country. Unfortunately he also had a young man's sense of invincibility – James led the Scottish army to disaster, and was the last British monarch to die on the battlefield. His court was also home to some extraordinary individuals, including the brilliant composer Robert Carver, but none so bizarre as John Damian, a European alchemist who charmed the king with promises of creating gold from base metals. Damian, known to many in the court as 'the French leech', was not only given the post of Abbot of Tongland, Galloway, but also had his experiments, along with copious amounts of 'aqua vitae' (supposedly for these experiments), financed by the King.

John also took a hand in court entertainments and organised the dances for New Year and weddings. In 1507, possibly to distract the king's attention from his failed attempts at alchemy, Damian tried to fly to France from the battlements of Stirling Castle, and landed in the midden (rubbish tip) below, fortunately only breaking his thigh. He blamed his failure on the fact that he had not been granted the eagles' feathers he ordered, but instead too many hens' feathers, which were attracted to the ground rather than to the sky. There are also accounts of the 'flying abbot' being attacked by birds.

I was enchanted by this colourful figure, and this string trio reflects some aspects of his story. It takes the form of four variations on the French folksong *L'Homme Armé*, a theme used by Robert Carver in one of his masses and perhaps appropriate to the court of the high-living James IV, who was fond of holding shooting competitions in the beautiful Great Hall of Stirling Castle. [Sally Beamish]

String Quartet No. 18 in A major, K.464 (1785)

W. A. Mozart

3 Andante

6 Moments Musicaux, Op.44 (2005)

György Kurtág (b.1926)

5 Rappel des oiseaux [étude pour les harmoniques]

Anecdotally a man of few words (at least according to the piano students who snagged a much-hallowed place with the Hungarian master, or the journalists who tried to speak to a man who has given just two interviews across his career), the music of György Kurtág could well be described as a

case of art imitating life. One of Europe's most significant living composers, it's difficult to reference his compositional style without also mentioning the pioneering Austrian composer Anton Webern (1883 – 1945), a man Kurtág studied devotedly, and whose music is often similarly characterised by that which is not there.

Kurtág's works tend to be short in duration (a typical piece might last a minute), but they are also short in spirit, condensing huge, unwieldy concepts – beauty, time, solace, grief, existentialism, space – into impressively concise, intensely focused, painstakingly deliberate fragments of expression. In the words of music writer Stephen Eddins: “Kurtág's genius lies in making every movement feel like it lasts just exactly as long as it ought to – each makes a complete statement and then is done – it's an attribute many composers could benefit from learning.”

This suite of "musical moments" is technically Kurtág's fourth string quartet. The fifth movement, performed tonight, is written almost entirely in harmonics, a technique of placing the finger very lightly on the string to produce a higher-pitched, different and usually other-worldly sound. In typical Kurtág style, the evocation of the title – ‘recalling birds’ – is guided even further by the direction to the musicians on the score: “light, tender, volatile”.

String Quintet No. 4 in G minor, K.516 (1787)

W. A. Mozart

4 Adagio

**INTERVAL
(APPROX. 20 MINS)**

Divertimento No.15 in B flat major, K.287 (1777)

W. A. Mozart

5 Menuetto – Trio

Divertimento No. 17 in D major, K.334 (1780)

W. A. Mozart

1 Allegro

Symphony No. 29 in A major, K. 201/186a (1774)

W. A. Mozart

1 Allegro moderato

2 Andante in D major

3 Menuetto: Allegretto – Trio

4 Allegro con spirito

ABOUT SCOTTISH ENSEMBLE

Re-defining the string orchestra, **Scottish Ensemble** (SE) inspires audiences in the UK and beyond with vibrant performances which are powerful, challenging and rewarding experiences. The UK's leading string orchestra is based in Glasgow and is built around a core of outstanding string players who perform together under Artistic Director Jonathan Morton.

As well as becoming increasingly known for its international collaborations with artists from other disciplines, from dance to theatre to visual art, SE regularly commissions new works, performs on prestigious international stages, and works with high-profile guest artists from trumpeter Alison Balsom, to mezzo-soprano Karen Cargill, to violinists Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Nicola Benedetti.

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