

**scottish  
ensemble**

# Concerts for a Summer's Night



**20 - 23 June 2022**

## **Programme**

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# Welcome to Scottish Creations

Welcome to the first edition of *Concerts for a Summer's Night*. The impulse for this event can be traced back to our much-loved *Concerts by Candlelight*, which have become an important and regular part of our musical calendar. In December each year, the combination of broad sonic explorations in beautifully atmospheric venues has proved to be a potent mix, and we wanted to explore the idea of creating a sister event at the opposite end of the seasonal cycle.

The venues have been chosen so that the wonderful qualities of natural light and long days at this time of the year can filter through and contribute to the atmosphere. When selecting the music, I let the themes of joy, beauty, community, spirit, lyricism, and light guide my choices. There is a huge range of voices, from the familiar (Mozart, Purcell, Ades, Dvorak, Schubert) to the less well known (Victor Herbert, Jessie Montgomery, Dobrinka Tabakova, Hans Abrahamssen, William Grant Still). I hope this varied and surprising set of pieces will enchant and bewitch us all.

Thank you for joining us - we are thrilled to be sharing this musical summer's evening with you !

Jonathan Morton



Artistic Director  
Scottish Ensemble

# Programme

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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (arr. anon)

Overture to *The Magic Flute*

Danish Traditional (arr. Danish String Quartet)

*Hur Var Du i Aftes Såd Sildig* (Where were you last night so late)

Franz Schubert

*Gretchen am Spinnrade* (arr. Dobrinka Tabakova)

Dobrinka Tabakova

Spinning a Yarn

Hans Abrahamsen

Prelude No.2 from String Quartet No.1, "10 Preludes"

Thomas Adès

*Das klinget so herrlich, das klinget so schön* (It sounds so wonderful, it sounds so nice) from *Arcadiana*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Queen of the Night Aria from *The Magic Flute*

Henry Purcell

Fantasia Upon One Note

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (arr. anon)

*Alles fühlt der Liebe Freuden* (All feel the joys of love) from *The Magic Flute*

Victor Herbert

*Liebes-scene* (Love scene) from *Serenade for Strings*

Jessie Montgomery

Strum

William Grant Still

Summerland

Antonín Dvořák

Final movement of String Quartet No.6, "American"

# Programme Notes

The thrill of discovery abounds on this breezy, summertime journey, as the players of Scottish Ensemble fuse the familiar with the unknown. And, from Franz Schubert spinning yarns to Jessie Montgomery's strummed strings, there's something for everybody as we chart a course through an assortment of musical styles.

There are few bolder opening statements than the tonight's curtain raiser, Mozart's *Overture to The Magic Flute*. Premiered in September 1791 just weeks before his death, Mozart's much-loved opener is packed with joy and spirit: three arresting chords set the scene, followed by a pithy, sprightly subject that scurries around the ensemble.

Next, a question you might well find in a Mozart opera: *Hur var du i aftes så sildig?* (*Where were you so late last night?*) The tune is a traditional Danish folk song, arranged imaginatively by the Danish String Quartet. "In these old melodies, we find immense beauty and depth, and we can't help but sing them through the medium of our string quartet," they say. Every repetition of the opening theme adds another curious voice to the mix, creating an air of mystery amongst the rusticness.

After meeting an inquisitive Danish partner, we then encounter a broken-hearted lover. Gretchen sits disconsolately at her spinning wheel, realising that she and Faust are not to be. "My peace is gone, my heart is heavy, I shall never ever find peace again," she cries.

Franz Schubert's first setting of Goethe is a stunning and revolutionary moment in music history, his emotionally charged, psychologically

driven setting igniting the German lieder form. Originally for soprano, *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (literally, Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel) was arranged for strings by Dobrinka Tabakova, and the weaving theme worms its way into Tabakova's own *Spinning a Yarn*. But where Schubert accompanies Gretchen's distress with a whizzing underlay, Tabakova's own yarn is less spun and more stretched, lamenting, as if at a later stage of grief.

Then come three pieces that form an unlikely trio.

The first shows a rather different side to the Danish composer Hans Abrahamsen that we know from his glassy, delicate song cycle *Let Me Tell You*, named the finest work of the 21st Century by The Guardian in 2019. The second movement of his String Quartet No. 2 '10 Preludes' (from 1973) is over before it's begun; insistent, chugging rhythms obscure crackling *pizzicatos* from the rest of the ensemble, before a series of crunching chords take the movement into a much darker place.

Abrahamsen keenly engages with composers of the past, having arranged or reorchestrated works by Debussy, Bach and Ligeti. Such dialogue also interests Thomas Adès, and in *Das klinget so herrlich, das klinget so schön* (It sounds so wonderful, it sounds so nice) from his string quartet *Arcadiana*, (the title coming from *The Magic Flute*), inspiration morphs into quotation. Poking through the glistening high strings are quotes from the *Magic Flute*'s most famous aria, *Der Hölle Rache* (or the *Queen of the Night* aria). If you miss them, don't worry – the full, original drama of Mozart's famous coloratura high-note aria is heard in its entirety next.

From flashes of notes that go by in an instant, to a slow rhapsody built a single pitch. Henry Purcell's Fantasias were originally written for four-part viol consorts (like an early version of the string quartet). The *Fantasia Upon One Note* was the only one of the fifteen fantasias (all written during the summer of 1680) to include a fifth viol – that part provides middle C drone, a sounding board for other parts to bounce off on tiptoed adventures. One final note from Mozart closes this chapter: Monostatos' fawning, scarcely believable aria *Alles fühlt der Liebe Freuden* (*Alles fühlt der Liebe Freuden*).

Then from Mozart's land of make-believe, we leap across the pond. "America is coming into a light music of its own – a music fresh and full of vitality, yet with a style and refinement that will make it as artistically alluring as European music." This from composer and long-time cellist of the Metropolitan Opera Victor Herbert in 1911, with his *Serenade for String Orchestra*. First performed in 1888, this charming set, the third movement of which (the *Liebeslied*) features here, is reminiscent of Frederick Delius' summery orchestral music, with a touch of Wagner as Herbert turns the screw towards the climax.

Jessie Montgomery is a name audiences should grow accustomed to. Recently named Composer-in-Residence at the Chicago Symphony and an increasingly popular composer on UK programmes, she combines elements from her background as a chamber musician with improvisation and vernacular music from America, making turbulent, colourful and lively creations. Montgomery calls *Strum* (2006, rev. 2012)

a salute to "American folk idioms, and the spirit of dance and movement," concluding in an ecstatic celebration, of which the strumming of instruments becomes a kind of fluctuating heartbeat.

Pulses quicken through *Strum*, and slow through the woozy wistfulness of William Grant Still's *Summerland*. Where *Strum* is all about nostalgia's relation to our everyday lives, Still's meditation (an arrangement of a movement from his piano piece *Three Visions*) tells the story of a human soul after death, offering a serene depiction of the ultimate comfort – the promise of an afterlife.

After Still offers a moment of transcendence, Antonín Dvořák provides a jovial pick-me-up. He completed his *String Quartet No.12* (the 'American') in record time, sketching the outline in just three days, and completing the work shortly after. Composed during Dvořák's first summer in the Bohemian colony of Spillville, Iowa (he'd initially left Europe for New York and a job at the new National Conservatory of Music) in 1893, it followed his Ninth Symphony, 'From The New World', and, as the Ninth sought to conjure the spirit of African-American spirituals, the quartet also marks a bold step away from the European string quartet tradition, embracing American folk music's driving rhythms and pentatonic themes. The final movement combines all of that: a spirited, rhythmic jaunt to round off this summer excursion.

# About the Performers



## Scottish Ensemble

The UK's leading string orchestra, Scottish Ensemble is a group of outstanding musicians championing music for strings. Founded in 1969, and based in Glasgow, we create dynamic, vibrant performances and musical events across Scotland, the UK and beyond.

Committed to musical collaboration, we not only regularly collaborate with high-profile guest artists – from trumpeter Alison Balsom and mezzo-soprano Sarah Connolly to violinists Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Nicola Benedetti, to name only a few – but also with artists from other disciplines and art forms.

Since 2014, Scottish Ensemble has presented a series of annual cross-artform collaborations that have so far included projects with visual artist Toby Paterson; Swedish contemporary dance company Andersson Dance; electronic-classical crossover composer Anna Meredith and visual artist Eleanor Meredith; and Scottish theatre companies Vanishing Point and Untitled Projects. We also has a long history of commissioning new works with recent commissions including works by Edgar Meyer, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Mica Levi and Ailie Robertson.

In recent years our international reputation has also grown considerably and we have performed in Taiwan, China, Brazil, the USA and across Europe, at festivals from the Thuringia Bach Festival to the Savannah Festival, Georgia, and venues including the John F. Kennedy Centre for Performing Arts (Washington D.C.) and Barbican Centre (London).

### *Violin 1*

Jonathan Morton  
Kate Suthers  
Cheryl Crockett  
Liza Johnson

### *Violin 2*

Tristan Gurney  
Laura Ghio  
George Smith

### *Viola*

Jane Atkins  
Edward Keenan

### *Cello*

Alison Lawrance  
Naomi Pavri

### *Double Bass*

Diane Clark

# Scottish Ensemble News



## 'D'n'A' – a new piece for string players from across Europe

After the resounding success of the inaugural Bridge Festival hosted by us in Glasgow this April, we continue our partnerships with Ensemble Resonanz, Trondheim Soloists and the PLMF Music Trust as we call out across Europe for contributions for a new piece, from across Europe.

This summer we're inviting string players to join us in creating brand new piece of music for all levels of experience: 'D'n'A' – by composer Sarah Freestone. This project has been developed specially to bring string players – young, amateur, and professional – together to celebrate the amazing richness of our shared European string music heritage.

To find out more and to download the score, visit our website at [scottishensemble.co.uk](http://scottishensemble.co.uk)

## Reflections on our Scottish Creations tour

Last month we toured across the Highlands and Islands with our Scottish Creations project. Kate Suthers led these concerts and told us about the experience which included a premiere from Ailie Robertson.

"I've felt really lucky to be a part of bringing Ailie's piece *Archetypes* to life for the first time. As well as the musicians on stage, and Ailie herself, each audience and each venue on this tour has been part of the shaping process, every concert informing the nuances of the next. Whenever Scottish Ensemble performs all or part of *Archetypes* again, a scent of all the people involved, and all the places we visited, will remain."

The travelling exhibition which accompanied Scottish Creations with contributions from 27 artists and makers from across the country, will be available to view online in the coming months, together with documentaries and more, and we're looking forward to sharing stories from this project long after the curtains closed. Keep an eye on our social media and website to find out more.

## Our Supporters

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Jacqueline Dale  
Fabienne Harrison  
Neil & Alison Kelly  
Andrew Pringle

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John Innes

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Stella Morse  
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James Potter  
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Malcolm & Aileen Wishart

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## Scottish Ensemble

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