

scottish  
ensemble



# Concerts by Candlelight

Music to warm your soul in the depths of winter

## Programme

### 7 - 13 December

Aberdeen - Inverness - Dundee - Perth - Edinburgh - Glasgow



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

[scottishensemble.co.uk](http://scottishensemble.co.uk)

# Welcome to Concerts by Candlelight



On behalf of the entire team at Scottish Ensemble I would like to welcome you to another edition of Concerts by Candlelight.

There is a beautiful tension between the monumental permanence of these ancient spaces and the immaterial, evanescent nature of live music. The alchemy of sound and stone can be so powerful, and we keep coming back to experience a kind of paradox - an ephemeral yet also timeless connection with something beautiful and precious.

When choosing music for these concerts, I think about atmosphere and pacing, trying to assemble a musical journey that focuses particularly on beauty, reflection, and connection. This year we are particularly excited to bring a world premiere to this edition of Concerts by Candlelight with David Fennessy's Rain I, a new work made possible thanks to the Calder Commissioning Fund. Rain I was composed with the resonant spaces of churches in mind - providing a dramatic and atmospheric opening to the concerts. There are works that have seasonal resonances, by Johann Sebastian Bach, Arvo Pärt, John Tavener and Joanna Marsh. And there is music that I hope will weave a kind of sonic tapestry, by John Adams, Dani Howard, Edmund Finnis, Caroline Shaw, George Walker, and Steve Reich.

These special concerts could not happen without your continued presence & enthusiasm, and we are grateful to be able to keep sharing these experiences that, we hope, are beautiful and memorable.

Jonathan Morton  
Artistic Director

# Programme

## David Fennessy

*RAIN Part 1*

A new work made possible by The Calder Commissioning Fund

## John Adams

*Shaker Loops: Movement 1 - Shaking and Trembling*

## Caroline Shaw (arr. Julian Azkoul)

*And the Swallow*

## George Walker

*Lyric for Strings*

## Dani Howard

*Heads or Tails*

## Johann Sebastian Bach (arr. Jonathan Morton)

*In dulci jubilo*

## Arvo Pärt

*O Immanuel from Greater Antiphons*

## Johann Sebastian Bach (arr. Jonathan Morton)

*Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich*

## Steve Reich

Duet for two violins and strings

## Joanna Marsh (arr. Julian Azkoul)

*In Winter's House*

## John Tavener

*The Lamb*

## Edmund Finnis

Quartet No.2 Movement 1

## John Adams

*Shaker Loops: Movement 4 - A Final Shaking*

Tonight's performance will last approximately 70 minutes with no interval.



We are recording and live streaming our Edinburgh performance of Concerts by Candlelight which will be available online for free after the tour - so you will have the opportunity to relive the performance on demand over the Christmas break!

# Notes on The Music

by Tom Coult

**John Adams** refers to looping explicitly in his youthful *Shaker Loops* of 1978, as he was finding his voice in the American minimalism scene. Where his older colleagues Philip Glass and Steve Reich's music up to this point had had a rather austere quality befitting the busy metropolitan grind of urban New York, Adams by this point was living in San Francisco. One can perhaps sense a brighter, more polished quality behind the driving rhythms, gleaming in Californian sun.

Any sunniness was hard-won however – Adams had written a string quartet, *Wavemaker* earlier that year with which he was deeply unsatisfied. He described its premiere as 'a dreadful experience', and fled the hall in shame. Seeing some promise in the piece however, Adams reworked it extensively for a larger string section, until *Shaker Loops* gradually emerged, to become one of his most performed works.

**Caroline Shaw's** *And the Swallow*, written originally for antiphonal choirs, was composed at the height of the Syrian refugee crisis, and its setting of Psalm 84 emphasises the human need for protection and a home ('*Even the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow her nest, where she may place her young*').

As always with Shaw, at its heart are simple chord progressions, but always shifting and moving, building and subsiding.

**George Walker's** *Lyric for strings*, like Adams' piece, grew out of a youthful string quartet. It was originally titled *Lament*, and was dedicated to his grandmother, a survivor of slavery, who had recently passed away.

The music charts a melody running almost unbroken throughout its six-minute duration. In its richness, its sense of elegy, and its ebbs and flows of energy and intensity, it recalls *Adagio* by Walker's Curtis Institute classmate Samuel Barber. *Lyric*, however, has more light amongst the darkness, and there is much sweetness and generosity in its short duration.

**Dani Howard**, like Edmund Finnis elsewhere in the programme, learnt cello as a child, and her feel for string instruments shines through in the resonance of open strings and harmonics, and the delicate string crossing on the first violin. *Heads or Tails* cites the hypnotic 'infinity loops' of designer Andreas Wannerstedt as an influence.

Scurrying, scuttling textures dart this way and that, always supported and urged on by rich and passionate tectonic plates of slower harmony underneath. These two levels interact; sometimes

tussling, sometimes combining to reach great vistas of arrival. In the second half, pizzicato lines add a pungent brittleness to the texture, but it is harmony and lyricism that push the music forward, until an eerie 'suspended motion' ending.

**Arvo Pärt** and **J.S. Bach** are two composers intensely influenced by their faith, but whose music has resonated deeply with audiences of all faiths and none. In Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*, he takes Lutheran hymns from the liturgical calendar, and reimagines them, weaving them ingeniously into intricate textures. The two being played tonight are both melodies associated with Christmas.

Pärt's *O Immanuel* (originally for choir) rises and thickens to huge blocks of sound, played fortissimo and punctuated by silences, beseeching '*Our King and Teacher...our Lord and our God*'. The final portion sees the music settle into a meditative hush.

As **Steve Reich** has developed into an elder statesman of American music, his music has tended to become more soft-edged, sweeter and lyrical, when compared to the more muscular strictness of his early work. 1993's *Duet* is a good example – two violins entwine, playing the same material in graceful canons over pulsing strings. There are several departures away from the home key of F major, but its magnetic pull creates an enormous sense of arrival on each return.

In *In Winter's House*, originally for a choir of low voices based on a poem by Jane Draycott, imagery of darkness turning to light abounds. **Joanna Marsh** finds this light in a sweetly glowing piece, taking its opening motif to new places all the time – sometimes bare, sometimes in thick sheets of warm harmony. There is a rocking, lilting feel to much of the piece, encouraged by a 5/4 time signature for the greater part of its duration.

One final choral piece for strings: *The Lamb* by **John Tavener**. Like Arvo Pärt, Tavener become associated with the 'holy minimalist' movement and was, like the Estonian, sincerely influenced by Orthodox Christianity.

The piece has two modes of behaviour. Firstly: an eerie, austere melody is stated, sometimes with its mirror image, to create an unsettling hush. Secondly: this same melody is re-contextualised in a rich, irresistible E minor, made all the more affecting by the frosty texture that preceded it. These two modes are alternated, twice, before it slows on the last line of Blake's poem ('Little Lamb, god bless thee').

**Edmund Finnis' String Quartet No. 2**, he writes, is 'one of the most concentrated, personal and intimate pieces I have written', and attempts to express an inexpressible feeling of his – 'I know it has something to do with love'. In this first movement, the lower instruments create hazy waves of harmony, over which lines wind their tendrils around each other, urging each other upwards, downwards, and towards their beautiful concluding plateau.

# About the Performers

## Scottish Ensemble

For half a century, Scottish Ensemble has been shrinking the gap between listeners and musicians. From our roots as a specialist early music ensemble, we have become a versatile performing group that makes ageless art for the here and now. We resist the constraints of a home venue, a set season or a creative routine. We are shaped by the changing times in which we live and by the collaborations we seek across boundaries.

Freethinking Scots established the Scottish Baroque Ensemble in 1969. We made our international reputation with global tours, festival appearances and a high-profile contract with Virgin Records. Now, we're as likely to play the music of the distant past as the music of the immediate future. We delve into traditional Scottish music and commission the nation's most visionary composers.

After more than fifty years, we have redefined what a group of twelve musicians can do. These days we tend to design each performance bespoke: a meeting of site, sound and vision that generates an atmosphere of its own. We have made cross-artform work a priority, collaborating with visual artists, digital artists, dance companies and theatre makers to continually refresh our musicianship and reboot our relationship to the music we've always played.

We hold our audience closer than ever. Our performances are designed to take you elsewhere for an hour, an evening or just a few minutes. Tea dances, Ceilidh's, and mindfulness sessions have been, and continue to be, vital elements of our artistic mission. Now, we belong everywhere and nowhere, from village halls to concert halls, to the digital space. With the support of Creative Scotland, we are proud to be a beacon of Scottish creativity for the whole world, physical and digital, as we continue to ensure you experience music differently. With us, your ears will always be in good hands.

### Artistic Director / Violin 1

Jonathan Morton

### Violin 1

Daniel Piro  
Liza Johnson  
Yik Liang Soo\*

### Violin 2

Tristan Gurney  
Kate Suthers  
Laura Ghio  
Filip Matasaru\*

### Viola

Jane Atkins  
Zoe Matthews  
Asher Zaccardelli

### Cello

Alison Lawrance  
Naomi Pavri  
Helen LaGrand\*

### Bass

Diane Clark

### \*Scottish Ensemble Young Artist

Professional development programme in partnership with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland to support the next generation of string players

# Ensemble News



## Welcoming our new Chair, Morag Burnett

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Morag Burnett as our new Chair of Trustees. Morag, who has a wealth of experience in the arts, is deeply committed to Scottish Ensemble's drive to create exhilarating musical experiences, push the boundaries of classical music and forge connections with diverse audiences. Morag has served as a trustee on our board for the past three years and succeeds Jeff Fergus as Chair. We are hugely grateful to Jeff for his tenure, a period which has seen us develop new digital initiatives, expand our offer for families and schools, and progress our Music for Wellbeing programme.



## Anna Meredith's 'Tull' - new release and film

Over the course of the year we have been working on something special, and rather pink. The first of a two-part film commission made in collaboration with Glasgow production company Forest of Black, Anna Meredith's *Tull* was released with Delphian Records last month. Merging the energy and precision of the notes, musicians hoisted on pink plinths, appear, and disappear in time to the music. A variation on the traditional Scots' tune *Tullochgorum*, AINS, director at Forest of Black describes the movement as: 'a visual idea that mirrored the creative freedom within Anna Meredith's piece' and a celebration of 'randomness' and 'unpredictability'. You can listen to *Tull* on Spotify, Apple Music, and view the film on YouTube or on [scottishensemble.co.uk](http://scottishensemble.co.uk).

The second film of our partnership with Forest of Black will be released in early 2024.

This festive season, consider supporting us by donating through our website, or by scanning the QR code below. If you would like to find out more about your donation, or how you can join **Strings Attached**, Scottish Ensemble's community of supporters, please contact Claire at [claire.gauci@scottishensemble.co.uk](mailto:claire.gauci@scottishensemble.co.uk)



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CCA, 350 Sauchiehall Street  
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