

ADVENTURES IN MUSIC
WITH SCOTLAND'S PIONEERING STRING ORCHESTRA
**scottish
ensemble**

Chamber Notes

Programme

Sun 7 October

Crichton Church, Dumfries

Mon 8 October

Perth Concert Hall

Tue 9 October

St Cecilia's Hall, Edinburgh

Wed 10 October

Eden Court, Inverness

Fri 12 October

Glasgow University Memorial Chapel

Sun 14 October

Kirkcudbright Parish Church



welcome to Chamber Notes

Mozart and Brahms wrote just one clarinet quintet each, both in the final years of their lives. But it's their inherent quality and charm, not only their solitary status, which has always made these quintets stand out amongst each composer's repertoire. Mozart's is now not only one of his best-known pieces, but one of the most cherished in the clarinet repertoire, and it's easy to see why: moments of understated virtuosity bloom from a soft, calm, mellow beauty. Brahms' quintet – modelled on Mozart's, as so many of his works are – is similarly autumnal in mood, with waves of contemplative major

and melancholic minor moods shifting like sunlight.

We're thrilled to be joined by clarinettist Matthew Hunt in this exploration of these two subtly nuanced works. We first performed this concert with Matthew in August this year in Plockton, and on Skye and Mull, alongside workshops with local musicians as part of our year-round creative learning programme, and it was a real pleasure collaborating with such a skilled chamber musician. We're sure you'll pick up on a little of this pleasure in today's performance together.

Programme

Johannes Brahms
Clarinet Quintet in B minor
Approx. 36 mins

Interval (approx. 20 minutes)*

John Luther Adams*
Maclaren Summit
(from *The Wind In High Places*)
Approx. 5 mins

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Clarinet Quintet in A Major
Approx. 32 mins

*no interval / Adams in Perth

Performers

Scottish Ensemble

Artistic Director and Violin
Jonathan Morton

Violin Cheryl Crockett
Viola Jane Atkins
Cello Alison Lawrance

Guest soloist

Clarinet
Matthew Hunt

notes on the music

Johannes Brahms

(1833 – 1897)

Clarinet Quintet in B minor
Op.115 (1891)

I Allegro

II Adagio

III Andantino – Presto non
assai, ma con sentimento

IV Con moto

“It is a really marvellous work, the wailing clarinet takes hold of one; it is most moving. And what interesting music, deep and full of meaning!” said Clara Schumann of Brahms’ only clarinet quintet.

Setting aside whether any performer would be happy with the description of their performance as ‘wailing’ (!), Brahms’ intimate acquaintance was surely right about the emotional depth of this piece, infused as it is with a sense of bubbling yearning.

Passing between major and minor keys across its four movements, the piece seems to undulate with quickly changing moods, creating the captivating effect of a restless mind shifting from thought to thought. These thoughts are sometimes sunny, sometimes gloomy, but always mobile; from moments of anxiousness bloom moments of optimism, creating a feeling of introspective contemplation.

Brahms would have been familiar with Mozart’s quintet, written nearly 100 years earlier, and there are similarities with Mozart’s sanguine precursor throughout, the most notable

perhaps being the mood of calm which dominates the opening of the second movements; in Brahms’, the restless mood of the first movement gives way to calm, softened, dreamy strings.

Similarly, the cheerful interlude of the third movement opening is followed by an agitated Presto section... which resolves again into placid sweetness.

All of these moods, though, eventually come full circle. The fourth movement – after moving through a series of intriguing variations, playing with fragments and wisps of existing material – ends with a loud B minor chord, as if signalling the end of these circular contemplations, before fading away to nothing.

John Luther Adams (1953)

The Wind In High Places
(2011)

II Maclaren Summit

The Wind in High Places, a tripartite piece for string quartet that uses only natural harmonics and open strings – played extremely quietly – to create a still, pastoral ambience... Could any new music be more delicately sparse, more wonderfully poetic? I think not.

John von Rhein, Chicago Tribune

When John Luther Adams' best friend, the composer, conductor and environmentalist Gordon Wright, died suddenly in 2007, Adams wrote three pieces for solo violin titled *Three High Places*, vignettes representing moments Adams and Wright had shared whilst camping. These pieces eventually led Adams to write his first string quartet, aged 59, called *The Wind in High Places*.

[Nadia Sirota]

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)

Clarinet Quintet in A major
("Stadler"), K. 581
(1789)

I Allegro

II Larghetto

III Minuetto – Trio I – Trio II

IV Allegretto con variazioni

Most modern performances of Mozart's only clarinet quintet will not sound exactly as they would have in the composer's day. As with the well-known Clarinet Concerto, this work was written for Anton Stadler, a talented clarinetist who was particularly noted for his skills in bringing out the lower register of the instrument. It was such a passion of Stadler's that the musician had in fact devised an extension for the clarinet to allow him to get even lower, and it was this instrument (now known as a basset clarinet) which Mozart composed the piece for. For the sake of convenience, today it's mostly performed on the standard clarinet in A or B-flat, but several recordings have been made on the original instrument.

One of the most striking elements of this piece is the democratic distribution of roles amongst each instrument. As dry as this may sound on paper, the results are captivating; whilst the solo clarinet resides officially in the spotlight, what with its different

timbre, as the melodic line weaves from the clarinet down through the various string instruments it also subtly, beautifully, blends in. The result is the pleasant sensation of seamless fluidity that infuses the whole work.

The first movement sets the scene perfectly for what's to come, with the melodic line being smoothly passed from the clarinet to the strings and back again, and virtuosic runs rippling throughout the strings in the second section. However, many will know this work for the languid second movement, with the clarinet drawing out its long, liquid melody over muted strings before giving in once again to that generous scattering of melody between the players. In the third movement, a minuet is followed by two trios – the first in a minor key and written only for strings, yet again gently playing with expectations. The original theme then returns in the fourth movement, rounding off the piece with a set of five light-hearted variations.

[Rosie Davies]

about the performers



Matthew Hunt

One of Europe's leading clarinetists, Matthew Hunt is a distinctive musician, renowned for the vocal quality of his playing and his ability to communicate with audiences.

Matthew enjoys an international career as both soloist and chamber musician, and currently holds the position of Solo Clarinetist of the Deutsche

Kammerphilharmonie as well as being a member of Ensemble 360. Matthew has collaborated with conductors including Paavo Järvi and Reinhard Goebel, and with orchestras including the Concertgebouw Chamber Orchestra and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. As a recording artist Matthew has featured on many film scores, including as clarinetist on the score for the hit film *Love Actually*.

What are your favourite pieces to play?

I have to confess, that Mozart clarinet quintet comes pretty much top of my list, but that's maybe too predictable. I'm a great fan of both Sibelius and Stravinsky. Always thrilled to play anything by either of them. This summer I played in a performance of Sibelius' fifth symphony. There are few pleasures like filling your lungs and playing the swans' airborne melody over a section of horns as they take over the bass line and that motif gets given the crown it's being pining for.

What's been the best moment of your career so far?

These are tricky questions! I do however remember a Schubert octet at Wigmore Hall with the one and only Pekka Kuusisto that's gonna take a lot of beating.

How about the biggest challenge?

This year, playing Magnus Lindberg's clarinet concerto in Bogotá at 3000m altitude. Deep breaths and fast fingers.

Do you have any pre-concert concert rituals?

I always worry that my clarinet reed is either too young and not blown in or is about to die. Wind players and their reeds have complicated relationships.

If you hadn't become a musician, what do you think you'd be doing now?

I'd be perfecting the perfect stuffed pasta recipe, which would very likely comprise squash, butter and sage.

What's the first thing you do when you get home?

Have a soak in the bath with a book

having played my beautiful 6'3" Blüthner grand piano whilst the bath was running.

What are the best things about being on tour?

Going for amazing meals around the world with my friends.

What are the worst things about being on tour?

Aside from going for bad meals around the world without any friends, not sleeping in my own bed.

Where in the world would you most like to live?

Ferrara in Italy – the stuffed pumpkin cappellacci with butter and sage are too good not to live there.

For more interviews in our Work & Play series go to scottishensemble.co.uk



Scottish Ensemble

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

Committed to musical collaboration, SE not only regularly collaborates 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, SE 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, most recently, Scottish theatre company Vanishing Point. SE also has a long history of commissioning

new works, by composers including Sir James Macmillan, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling and many more.

In recent years SE's international reputation has also grown considerably and SE has recently performed in Taiwan, China, Brazil, the USA and across Europe, at festivals from the Thuringia Bach Festival to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and venues including the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts (Washington D.C.) and the Barbican Centre (London).



Jonathan Morton Artistic Director

Violinist Jonathan Morton is in high demand as a chamber musician, soloist, teacher and leader. As Principal First Violin with London Sinfonietta, Jon has worked closely with many of today's leading composers and performers, including Steve Reich, Harrison Birtwhistle,

Mica Levi, Jonny Greenwood, Louis Andriessen, Thurston Moore and many others. Regularly praised for his eclectic, engaging approach to programming and the presentation of music in general, he has a particular passion for 20th- and 21st-century music, as well as bringing a fresh perspective to older works.